

## JUNGLE BEASTS AND MEN

**BY THE SAME AUTHOR**

**KARI THE ELEPHANT**

"Written for children, but it is a tale to delight anyone who reads it."

—*Chicago Evening Post.*

"Told with a dash of adventure that will stir the blood of any boy, as the story of the jungle, mysterious and inscrutable, will fire his imagination."—*The Literary Review.*

**CASTE AND OUTCAST**

The story of the author's youth in India and his experiences as a student in the United States.

"We ought to have a book like this written by a chosen youth from every nation in the world—by a young man who, like Mr. Mukerji, represents the best in his own tradition and who has a gift for words."

—*The Tribune.*

**E. P. DUTTON & CO., Inc.**



# JUNGLE BEASTS AND MEN

BY

DHAN GOPAL MUKERJI

AUTHOR OF

"KARI THE ELEPHANT," "CASTE AND OUTCAST," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

J. E. ALLEN



NEW YORK

E. P. DUTTON & CO., INC.

WE SAW A TAWNY MASS FALL ON THE NECK OF THE BULL

Copyright, 1923  
By E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

*All Rights Reserved*

*First Printing . . July, 1923*  
*Second Printing . . Jan., 1924*  
*Third Printing . . Nov., 1924*  
*Fourth Printing . . Feb., 1926*  
*Fifth Printing . . April, 1928*  
*Sixth Printing . . Aug., 1928*  
*Seventh Printing . . Oct., 1929*

TO  
*Priscilla Kennaday*  
THE FIRST LISTENER TO MY STORIES

*Printed in the United States of America*

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. FACING THE TIGER IN THE JUNGLE . . .	1
II. FIGHTING THE EPIDEMIC . . . . .	27
III. THE MAGICIAN . . . . .	45
IV. THE WONDER-WORKER'S HOUSE . . .	63
V. THE TALE OF THE PYTHON . . . . .	77
VI. THE HOUSE OF THE NOBLE . . . . .	109
VII. THE HIMALAYAS AND THE RIVER BANK .	131

## ILLUSTRATIONS

We Saw a Tawny Mass Fall on the Neck of the Bull . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
We Ran for the Housetop . . . . .	<small>FACING PAGE</small> 20
With a Growl that almost Shook the Earth He Sprang towards Us . . . . .	24
Trees Grew Out of Barren Ground under Our Very Eyes . . . . .	48
Then Followed a Scramble for the Arms, and a Terrible Onslaught Ensued . . . . .	102
We Went through Many Cities and Places and Saw Many Things . . . . .	140
He Made a Mighty Swipe with His Terrible Tail	150

**JUNGLE BEASTS AND MEN**

**CHAPTER I**

**FACING THE TIGER IN THE  
JUNGLE**

## CHAPTER I

### FACING THE TIGER IN THE JUNGLE

**W**E were going on a pilgrimage to the Himalayas. I was fifteen and my friend was fourteen. We wanted to see shrines, cities and mountains. As we wandered along we came to the jungle country, on the edge of which dwelt the father and mother of my friend, Radjah. Radjah's parents were well-to-do Brahmans, priests by caste, whose duty it was to live lives of poverty and look after the education and the moral upbringing of their community. Radjah's father was called Thakoor, which means "the priest."

The day we reached Radjah's village a very terrible thing happened. In the evening in India the cattle come home from the field and graze a few minutes in the open yard before

#### 4      Jungle Beasts and Men

the house, and then, so that they will not be attacked by any animals, they are driven into the cowshed and shut up for the night. In the jungle country, the tigers generally come into the village at night and attack the cattle, but no tiger will enter anything that has a roof on it, and walls around it. They wait outside, growling and scratching the walls of the barns trying to frighten the cattle inside. Then the cattle inside the shed get frightened, break loose, and stampede into the open. Of course, once they do this they are immediately killed by the tigers and leopards who are waiting for them.

We had reached the home of my friend toward sundown. High up on the roof of the house we saw peacocks strutting up and down gleaming like gold and burning emeralds. Against the horizon the palm trees dripped with sunlight, and the blue sky flashed like a pigeon's throat. A half mile away was the fringe of the jungle, skirting a silent black river on the bank of which the cattle belonging

#### Facing the Tiger in the Jungle    5

to Thakoor's family were grazing. We heard the cowherd playing his flute in the distance.

After we had made our obeisance to the older people and had washed our feet, hands and face, my friend, Radjah, and I went upstairs on the roof. On seeing us, the peacocks ran away and huddled in a corner in great agitation. From the housetop we could see the cattle coming home; the dust from their feet rose against the sky, giving the atmosphere a beautiful saffron haze. The cowherd went on playing his flute as the sun went down. In the stillness of the evening the silence was falling like water in a dream. The earth was more than still, space was almost tremulous with silence.

Suddenly we saw the bushes near the reeds on the other side of the river tremble. A little later the reeds began to move and hardly had we discerned this movement of the reeds when a flock of gold leaped up in the air, gleamed in the sunlight and fell on the near side of the stream. It was a tiger and apparently a very

## 6 Jungle Beasts and Men

hungry one, for he had come before dark and was pursuing the home-going cattle. He hid himself in the tall grasses along the river's edge. We were unable to see him again, but as we watched we saw the green blades of grass that had been so still sway like spears of steel in the hands of warriors.

The cattle had reached home. The flute player had stopped playing his flute and had left his charges grazing about in front of the house while he had gone in to prepare the shed for the night. Radjah and I were wondering what had happened to the tiger.

Radjah remarked, "He will not dare come near the house until it is dark."

I replied, "How do you know?"

And Radjah answered, "No tiger has ever come to man's habitation in broad daylight."

I said, "Are you sure of it?"

Radjah replied, "I am, because for as long as I can remember, I have never seen in our village any killing by a tiger or a leopard until after sundown, and then you can't see, you can

## Facing the Tiger in the Jungle 7

only hear the tigers and the groans of the animals."

I said to him, "Then there is no danger to the cattle in grazing in front of the house, just before dusk?"

Radjah answered, "None whatsoever."

Hardly had we spoken thus when the cattle stood still and raised their heads. From the housetop where we stood we heard a snarl, and saw a mass of gold scarred with black rushing toward us. The cattle all stood in a row, facing the danger. This frightened the attacking beast. He stood still for a minute and crouched, making a feint to walk backwards. His movement was slight but quite distinct. Seeing this, one of the bulls charged after him, with his head down. The tiger turned around and ran to a distance of about thirty feet. This apparently appeased the bull's wrath. Instead of pursuing the tiger any further, he turned around and began to walk back to the drove still standing still. Of a sudden a terrific roar shook the sky. A tremor went through us all.

## 8      Jungle Beasts and Men

I felt my legs shaking under me just as the tall grass blades had trembled, only a few minutes before. Hardly had the echo of the roar died away, when we saw a tawny mass gleam through the last flecks of sunlight, and fall on the neck of the bull. One could almost hear the breaking of the bull's bones as he fell to earth like a tree falling in a forest. The rest of the herd were seized with fright, and rushed to the cowshed in a wild stampede.

There before our eyes lay the bull in a pool of blood with the tiger's claws and teeth buried deep in its shoulder. Very soon, though to us it seemed like an age, the sun was gone and darkness possessed the land.

We started downstairs and then there came a mighty snarl, like a rebuke from the voice of God. The whole house seemed to tremble. Thakoor shut up the cattle, lit the lamps outside and made ready for an all-night vigil. We walked very softly, but every time our feet made the slightest sound on the roof, there was an answering roar of anger from afar. It

## Facing the Tiger in the Jungle 9

seemed a long way off in the darkness; although, as a matter of fact, it was only a hundred yards from where we were to the spot where the tiger was having his evening meal.

When we boys in our silent and panicky progress had finally reached the bottom of the stairs, Thakoor and his wife were eagerly waiting for us. Fear was written on their faces, but as soon as they saw us their anxiety was lessened.

When Radjah told his father what had happened, the old gentleman said, "I know, my child. This is the first time in twenty years a tiger has dared come into the village before the sun has set. It means trouble for us all. As long as the animals come at night, we are all protected, because everything is locked up and there is not much danger. But if they come and attack us in the daytime, we will have to take very careful measures to guard ourselves."

I said to him, "But they do often come at night, don't they?"

## 10 Jungle Beasts and Men

"Yes, they do," Thakoor answered. "But at night we light the fires in the house, and if they see the fires they never attack us. Sometimes I have slept in the jungle with a fire burning near me, and not an animal dared come near enough to attack me. But if they come during the daytime, as this tiger has done, we will have to do something else, because we cannot suspend work and shut up everything waiting for him to come and go. We must do our work. That is what God has given us the daylight for."

I asked him again, "Why is this tiger so unusually brave?"

He replied, "Because two stupid westerners have made him brave."

"Westerners!" I exclaimed.

"Yes. I will tell you the story after the evening meditation is over."

A small bell was rung, and Radjah's mother took us to the family chapel. She asked us to meditate on God, and before we had begun to do this she herself said: "Lo, evening comes

## Facing the Tiger in the Jungle 11

on wings of silence. Soften thy voices of rebellion. Listen to the speech of God, who is the ultimate silence and who resides in our own hearts. Let us listen to the voice of silence."

After those words, we sat still and tried to listen to the evening silence that was walking over the land, coming out of the forest, passing through the village, reaching far into the outer spaces. The stars were like lamps lit for the worship of Him whose name is Silence.

After the meditation was over, through the iron barred windows—the windows in the jungle countries have iron bars so that nothing can come through them into the house—we caught sight of a pair of strange gleaming eyes. Far away, beyond these eyes of the tiger, we could see many, many eyes looming out of the spaces of the night.

I asked my friend, "What are those lights doing there?"

And he answered me, "As these two green eyes are the tiger's, so those eyes are of the

## 12     Jungle Beasts and Men

wildcats and the jackals. They are waiting for the tiger to finish his dinner so that they can fall upon the remnants of his feast and have a little meal of their own."

Again I questioned: "Don't those eyes frighten you?"

"No," said he, "I have seen them often. When I am at home at night, I don't go to sleep immediately. I generally put out the light and sit here watching the eyes come and go. By their eyes I know the beasts of the jungle. Those pale, reddish eyes belong to the cheetah. Those strange blue ones belong to the cats, and those yellow ones belong to the jackals. But I can tell them all even though they sometimes change as they move about. I can also smell the air and tell what is walking by. The tigers smell like hate; the jackals smell like fear; and the wildcat smells like rotten roots. Tomorrow I will take you into the jungle and teach you, too, how to tell the whereabouts of the animals by your sense of smell."

## Facing the Tiger in the Jungle 13

We heard a snarl and a yell in the distance. This was not a snarl of rebuke for us who were talking, it was only the triumphant cry of his lordship, the tiger, telling the other animals that he had almost finished his dinner. As we watched and listened, we could see a tremble running through the wall of eyes in the distance.

Our watching was interrupted by Thakoor's request that we should come to the dinner which his wife had now prepared, but, though even a man-eating tiger could not rob us of our healthy young appetites, the minds of all of us were fixed upon the beast outside. We eagerly listened to Thakoor as he told us how once in a great while this very tiger had come at night and killed a cow, and how he had recently killed a man. At this the villagers had become so frightened that they had gone to the British magistrate, ten miles away, and had asked him to bring his rifle to shoot the tiger. "None but the western people, in our country, are allowed to carry a rifle unless they happen

## 14 Jungle Beasts and Men

to be of importance. And no one in my house is of great enough importance," concluded Thakoor.

"But," I said, "you have a rifle."

"Yes," he answered, "but I cannot use it without a permit, and I have asked for this permit, which may come within a day or so."

I exclaimed in horror, "But in the meantime the tiger is eating people and domestic animals!"

"Yes," he said. "But I haven't yet explained why the tiger is brave enough to come into the village in the daytime. Listen and I will tell you.

"After this tiger had killed his first man, the magistrate came to shoot the tiger. The poor man did not know much about tigers at that time. Apparently he knew something about shooting, so one evening he went across the river with his men and camped on the little hillock that you can see in the daylight, across the river. They went at about four o'clock, and within half an hour the tiger smelt their

## Facing the Tiger in the Jungle 15

presence. [I was told all this, I didn't see it.] Pretty soon the tall grasses began to move and they said it felt as if a piece of silk were being torn in two without any noise. They could not hear the noise of the tiger coming, but they could feel that it was he. You know the law of the jungle? You never hear anything, but you feel its presence. The men grew tense with terror. They felt the presence of the monster, but they did not know which way he was going to leap.

"Suddenly they saw a flash of color above the grass. It was the tiger's head, and then with one snarl he was right before them. The men and the tiger alike were terrified. He was looking for some one man for his evening meal, but he did not expect a whole butcher shop of human beings. At least it seemed so by the way he looked at them and turned around to seek cover.

"The instant the tiger turned his back, the stupid magistrate, who did not know how to shoot tigers, fired and apparently wounded the

## 16 Jungle Beasts and Men

tiger. That was a great mistake. As the rifle shot rang out, the tiger gave a terrible cry of anger and pain, leaped into the air, and fell into the underbrush. All that was heard after that was the rustling of leaves and the trembling of branches. Soon dusk began to fall, so the men came back to the village.

"The next day this westerner and his men went out to track the wounded tiger to his lair, where they expected to find him dead."

I volunteered, "They were very optimistic."

Thakoor answered, "Yes, but they did not know what was waiting for them. When they came to the place where they had last seen the tiger, they found nothing but a few drops of blood on the ground. When they tracked their way into the undergrowth, they found only leaves and drops of blood. Pretty soon the tracks were lost and so were the men. The magistrate thought he had killed the tiger, so he went home.

"Hardly a week had passed, however, when the tiger, now completely recovered, emerged

## Facing the Tiger in the Jungle 17

from the jungle again, and from that day he has kept on coming into the village whenever he pleases. In fact, I believe if someone asked the tiger who the village belonged to, he would answer that it belonged to him."

While Thakoor had been telling us all this we kept hearing noises, and we knew it was from the other side of the river. The tiger had finished his meal and was now drinking. Having drunk of the cool water of the stream, he was going home singing.

It was time to go to bed, but my friend and I, who were in the same room, after we had put out the light, peeked through the windows before turning in. Soon we saw eyes moving back and forth. My friend said, "Those are the leopards, two of them. They are going to have their dinner first."

We could hear the song of the night bird above our heads. It is said in India that the *chakoras* sing their way up into the heights of the sky and disappear into the caves of the moon. The moon voices of the birds fell as

## 18      Jungle Beasts and Men

the dew falls. Then the leopards left and my friend said, "Now see the jackals and the wild-cats." But I was so tired after the day's walk that I could watch no more and soon fell asleep.

The next day where the bull had been slain we found nothing but a heap of bones. It was evident that all the denizens of the forest had fed their hunger all night long. My friend wanted to move on and continue our pilgrimage, but I said that I wanted to see what would happen to this village if no one killed the tiger.

He said, "Oh, my father will kill him as soon as he gets the permit and the bullets from the town."

That day, again, at five o'clock the tiger came, but the village was prepared with fires burning in the houses. We heard the tiger prowling about the village as if it belonged to him. At night we put out our lights and looked through the windows into the outer spaces, and although the moon faded out of

## Facing the Tiger in the Jungle 19

sight at about eight o'clock there was enough light left for us to see dimly what was going on outside. The tiger came to where he had left his kill the previous night. We could hear his claws on the bones, but he did not stay there a minute. With a leap he was in front of us, we could see his green eyes and hear him growl, as he walked up and down in front of the window. We struck a match and with a terrific cry he leaped out of sight. The moonlight had gone, the country was wrapt in darkness and silence. Now we could see all kinds of eyes flashing in and out, as they moved about the village.

Then from a distance we heard the tiger's angry growl, at which all other animals fled deep into the jungle, away from the wrath of its lord. However, one gets tired of watching a tiger hour after hour, so we went to sleep.

The next morning, long after sunlight, the villagers ventured out and we found no harm had been done to anybody, but the place was simply filled with animal stench, which hadn't

## 20 Jungle Beasts and Men

as yet been dissipated by the pure air of the morning. That morning the government permit came to Thakoor, allowing him to use his rifle. The village was overjoyed. But as days passed and the tiger did not come back, we all lost interest in him, and on the eighth day my friend and I prepared to resume our pilgrimage.

As we were leaving the village about two o'clock in the afternoon, we were startled at the sight of the villagers running wildly in all directions to an accompaniment of terrific screams. We realized that the tiger had come back. We ran for the housetop from which point we saw the tiger standing on the little hillock, looking at the village and yawning.

The villagers came to Thakoor and begged him to shoot the tiger.

Thakoor answered, "Why don't you go and get the western magistrate to come and shoot the tiger?"

But the villagers said, "He is too young.



WE RAN FOR THE HOUSETOP

## Facing the Tiger in the Jungle 21

He hasn't yet finished growing. We cannot trust him."

Then Thakoor said, "All right, I will shoot the tiger for you. Leave me alone to meditate."

He called his son and me and said, "Will you go with me?"

Of course we were overjoyed at the prospect. Radjah's mother raised a lot of objections, but somehow we managed to overrule her.

Thakoor said, "Now let us meditate ten minutes before we go."

I asked "Upon what should we meditate?"

And he answered, "Hold these two sentences in your thoughts and sit still ten minutes: 'I am perfect. I am brave.'"

After the meditation, Thakoor took his rifle, loaded it and walked out. We went to the river bank but we could not find the tiger on the hillock. We crossed the river about five hundred yards away from where the tiger had been and began to walk toward the hillock on

## 22      Jungle Beasts and Men

whose edges the tiger would be crouching. At least Thakoor thought this, but we found nothing but torn bushes. In the tall grasses we came to a clearing, but still there was no tiger. All about we searched cautiously and at last we spied our foe. He was lying fast asleep.

I thought that all of us would go softly up and then put the barrel of the gun into the tiger's ear and fire. Thakoor had his rifle. We had nothing in our hands. That was part of the bargain. He would not take us along unless we carried no weapon, so there we were, two helpless boys and a man who would not take advantage of the sleeping tiger.

He signalled us to stand still. Pretty soon we felt a quiver go through the tiger's body. This we knew was a sign that in his sleep he was smelling the presence of human beings. To my astonishment—Thakoor took a stone and hurled it at the tiger. It fell on the middle of his body, and as suddenly as fire leaps out of wood, the tiger was up in a flash of gold.

## Facing the Tiger in the Jungle 23

He looked in two directions and then turned his head and saw us. I could see the look of surprise on his face. His muscles relaxed for an instant, then they stiffened. Thakoor raised the rifle; the tiger crouched. But Thakoor did not fire.

The tiger moaned as if talking to himself and then turned. With a growl that almost shook the earth he sprang towards us. I could see his head rise first, go straight up to the sky almost, then I saw his head go down and his tail go up in the air, while the silence was broken with a mighty, sickening sound, half moan, half roar. It was like watching a tower fall in a dream. He came nearer and nearer. Suddenly we saw a flame of red before us, and heard a deafening noise. At the instant of curving down upon us, the tiger fell from the air in a straight line.

I was so terror-stricken that I did not realize the tiger was lying there dead. My friend pulled me by the hand and shouted, "Come! See, the bullet has gone through his head!

## 24 Jungle Beasts and Men

I walked to the wounded beast. He was not wounded; he was dead. And yet there was a slight twitch to his left rear leg. This was the leg that had a scar on it where the magistrate had shot him.

After we had watched the flaying of the tiger and found that he measured nine feet long, not counting his tail, we prepared to resume our pilgrimage. But before setting out, I asked Thakoor why he had shot the tiger in the way he had.

"Is there any other way of doing it?" he answered.

I replied, "While you were meditating here for ten minutes on God, the tiger might have been killing somebody over there."

He answered, "If you do not meditate, how can you overcome your fear?"

To my astonished question, "What do you mean?", he answered, "No animal is ever killed that is not first frightened. You know the bull that was killed the other day. The tiger could not have killed the bull, had he not frightened



WITH A GROWL THAT ALMOST SHOOK THE EARTH HE SPRANG TOWARDS US

## Facing the Tiger in the Jungle 25

the poor creature by his terrible roar, and once frightened, then, it was easy for the tiger to kill him. Now, what had happened in the village was not that the tiger was so dangerous, but that we were all so frightened that we were nearly killed by him long before he came and attacked us. It was because of this fear that I asked you to meditate, that we might conquer our fear before we went out."

"But," I said, "why didn't we go and kill him when he was asleep, instead of rousing him? Didn't that create new dangers?"

"No," Thakoor answered. "It is the law of the Hindus that one must not kill anything, even the most dangerous, without first giving it warning. It is not fair play. If there is fair play between man and man, there must be fair play between man and beast. And when I threw the stone and gave the tiger warning, I knew at once I could kill him."

I asked in amazement, "How?"

"Don't you see," said he, "by looking straight into his eyes, I asserted my will power

## 26      Jungle Beasts and Men

over his will power. He was already shot, and the rifle fire finished that which in my mind had long ago been accomplished. And now as I give you both my blessings before you depart on your pilgrimage, remember, my son, and you whom I may call my son, that wherever there is danger, humble it first with your eyes and your will power, and then you will be able to conquer it."

Radjah's mother came out, and we bowed our heads and touched our foreheads to the ground, took the dust from her feet, since the mother is most sacred in India, and departed.

Later I shall tell you how I profited by that statement of Thakoor's. "In order to conquer a danger, one must overcome it first by will power, before attacking it physically."

## CHAPTER II

### FIGHTING THE EPIDEMIC

## CHAPTER II

### FIGHTING THE EPIDEMIC

ON arriving at the next village, we found that the whole countryside was stricken with cholera. There was not a single house that death had not entered, as we could tell by the strange silence that reigned in every dwellingplace of man. Everywhere people were either taking the dead to the burning ghauts or they were coming back from funeral services. Cholera had walked through the land like a net of silence in which it was gathering the souls of men, as a fisherman's net gathers in his catch at daybreak. We could not help but feel ourselves captives of the net as we set foot in that village.

However, the feeling of fear did not last long, since we had to busy ourselves doing

other things, such as taking care of the sick and helping to take the dead to the burning grounds, where they were to be cremated. Being without social ties, we could do anything there; that is, we could eat any kind of food, nurse anybody who needed nursing, and cremate the dead of any household, irrespective of social status.

The villagers were very nice. They did not take advantage of our presence, but rather they made use of us in a very sane way, sending us first into a house from which two bodies had been taken to be cremated, and where there remained an old woman and her daughter-in-law, sick unto death and with no one to care for them.

"My friend, this is indeed our place," I said to Radjah, and then I stayed with the stricken girl while Radjah went to the adjoining room to the old mother.

After living in a city possessed by death, the most weird feelings take possession of one. In the daytime the silence does not exactly

frighten you, but it does make you suspicious of everything. Death seems like a human being, walking about stealthily. The sunlight becomes unbearable, and you pray for darkness. At night, on the other hand, a certain peace seems to come to you. There is nothing uncanny about the silence then, for it is customary that the night should be silent. So after the day spent in the sick-rooms, when the moon came with her horns piercing the branches of the trees, we felt as if a friend were going by.

After some hours of watching I went in then to relieve my friend and sent him to take my place with my patient. I looked at the woman and saw that she was breathing regularly and without any trace of the great pain that had been racking the poor little girl whom I had been watching for the last six hours. By the flickering lamplight each of us nursed his patient, I this woman, and my friend the girl in the adjacent room. We spoke aloud to each other, across the silence of the night,

## 32      Jungle Beasts and Men

and we wondered why the people who had gone to cremate the dead about noon had not come back yet. With the strain we were both under and with the hunger we were now suffering, we gradually lapsed into silence, and I fixed all my attention upon the haggard face of my patient.

Suddenly a terrific yell rent the sky, and my friend rushed from his room, fairly plunging into mine as he slammed the door after him.

I asked him in terror and surprise, "Are you mad?"

"She is dead!" he stammered.

He was trembling so that I had to take him by the shoulders to steady him as I asked, "Then why are you shouting so?"

He gasped, "There is a tiger in the house."

"No," I reassured him as I opened the door and went into the next room. "You are only frightened." Radjah was right about the girl, but there was no tiger in the house, that was clear to me. And then as I continued my

## Fighting the Epidemic      33

search, with my mind already made up, I caught sight in the dark of a pair of gleaming eyes, and then I heard soft footsteps. I hurried out of the room and looked in the direction in which the footsteps had disappeared, and lo, before me stood a jackal who had been taken by surprise. He bounded off and disappeared into the night. I called to Radjah, and told him what it was. Our nerves had become so unstrung that we were seeing tigers for jackals as people make mountains out of mole-hills.

The woman who had been sleeping so quietly now opened her eyes and said, "Are you well?"

I answered, "We are well," and I added as calmly as I could, "We have been taking care of you. Are you better?"

She shook her head and sighed, "So many have died that I think no one can be well; no one can be alive."

I tried to reassure her, "In this village people are frightened, that is all."

## 34      Jungle Beasts and Men

She asked, "How is my daughter-in-law?"

We had to tell her a lie, and so answered: "She is sleeping nicely."

Before long we heard people talking outside, and through the door we noticed the light from a torch falling and flickering in the gloom of the house. The three men who had gone to cremate the dead had come back. We went into the hall, and announced to them what had happened. They took the news of the girl's death with great courage and in perfect silence. Apparently so many had died that these two men who lived in this house with their relatives had gotten accustomed to death. Their neighbor who had come to help them had seen so many dead around him during the past fortnight that he, too, took our announcement as a matter of course.

They were all three fatigued, so we offered to take the dead girl to the burning ghaut and cremate her body, but they would not trust us because we were only fifteen years old. They told us we didn't know how. So we had to

## Fighting the Epidemic      35

take the neighbor along as guide and helper. We put the body on a stretcher made of very light bamboo and rope and carried it to the river bank on the edge of the village, where two or three pyres were just dying down, their smouldering fires gleaming like eyes in the head of the night. The moon was now hidden in the clouds, so that we heard rather than saw the river running by between us and the thick jungle on the other bank.

There was just enough wood piled up in one place to make a bed. There was not, however, enough to cover the body so Radjah and the neighbor took the lantern and went to the forest to hew some wood. I stayed behind alone.

Pretty soon I began to notice what I thought were fireflies, moving up and down. Along with the fireflies came all kinds of lights, from all directions, swarming around like gleaming butterflies. For a while I was surprised. I thought I had gone out of my head. As I sat there watching, slowly the lights came

## 36      Jungle Beasts and Men

nearer and nearer and nearer. Then at last I saw that they were not fireflies at all, but the eyes of jackals and wildcats. These animals had become so daring that they were actually sniffing around the place where we were building the fire. I took a stick from the pile and beat them off. It was terrible. Every time I beat some in one direction, others would come from other directions

I do not know how long this battle lasted, but finally I saw a lantern in the distance and heard voices. It was Radjah and his guide, who were pulling something behind them. The noise of their coming was like magic. The eyes disappeared and I was left alone in utter darkness, except for one little smouldering pyre where a few charcoal pieces were still burning. That was all I could see in one direction, and in the other, I saw the lantern coming nearer.

The two had gathered together an enormous pile of wood and were pulling it across the meadow from the jungle. We piled it up, set

## Fighting the Epidemic      37

fire to it and cremated our dead. I was so fatigued that I fell asleep within ten yards of the fire, right on the grassy ground.

How long I slept I do not know. I was roused by a terrific noise, followed by a very fierce interval of silence, and then another noise. I was more bewildered than awakened. The fire was still burning and the two others were crouching near it. Before them something was standing. I crawled towards them and there I saw a tiger standing facing us. He was very hungry; or he would not have braved coming near the fire. He prowled stealthily around the fire, about twenty yards from where we were, while we walked around the fire in a defensive manner. Sometimes he would come near, but we would stir up the wood with the axe that we had brought with us, making the fire flare up suddenly, and he would bound off into the distance. We could tell from his eyes in the dark about where he was moving. There must have been other animals in the distance, for we could hear

## 38      Jungle Beasts and Men

rustling movements in the outer spaces of the night.

We took counsel with one another.

Radjah said, "The battle is three to one, but I am sure he will take one of us before it is over."

I replied, "Well, then, I had better go and give myself up to him."

The neighbor answered, "What child's talk is this? We have fire and we have an axe. Why should a tiger eat up one of three human beings, who have such excellent weapons at their disposal?"

"But," I said, "the fire is going to go out soon, since the dead is almost burned."

To which Radjah added, "What can we do with an axe?"

The neighbor stood speechless, wondering what to do with a hungry tiger and two scared boys to manage.

Then Radjah proposed, "There is only one way out of it. If we could each take a burning brand from the fire we would be safe, and

## Fighting the Epidemic      39

then there is the lantern which one of us could use. The tiger will not come near us while we hold fire in our hands."

"But there are no brands." I objected, "All the logs have burned out. The last bits of twigs are not enough to keep him away very long. And as for the lantern, only one can carry it and he only would be saved."

Then the tiger began circling around us, again and again. We walked around and around the fire, he at a considerable distance, and we walking very close to what was left of the burning pile. Now and again, we would hear, far off in the distance, the cry of the jackals. Then the tiger would snarl at them, and a malicious silence followed.

Every minute the fire was going down and the tiger was inching up on us. There was only one thing to do and that was to entice the tiger into a trap and kill him. But what should the trap consist of?

Radjah, who had lived near the jungle all his life, said, "We can make a very excellent

trap if one of us is courageous enough to be the bait."

And this is how we baited the tiger.

"One of us," explained Radjah, "must go out near enough to draw the tiger toward the fire. I will go out and reach the farthest end of the firelight so that thus I may draw the tiger toward me. Then I will walk backwards and the further back I come the more I will increase my pace until at the moment that the tiger crouches for his spring, I will turn around and run toward the fire. Now he will leap and land right where I was. Then not finding me there, he will leap again. By this time I will have walked very close to the fire, almost burning myself. With the second bound after me, he will fall into the flames. And then as he falls into the burning pyre he will sink into it and he will have no solid footing there for another leap. But it will not take him long to paw through the wood and the ashes to the hard earth which is his spring-

board. Then you must quickly hit him with the axe and crush his skull."

Of course this sounded like a fairy story, but as we saw the tiger coming again, and the space between us becoming smaller and smaller, something desperate had to be done, and Radjah's advice was the only choice left to us. So I said to him, "You are clever in wielding an axe. You must deal him the fatal blow."

The neighbor said, "In that case I will go out and entice the tiger."

"No, you can't," I retorted, "you have been cremating the dead all day and you are very tired. I am not. I will go out and entice the tiger, and you two do the rest."

The neighbor wouldn't hear of it, so we had to cast lots. It fell to me to go and face the tiger.

At first I felt very happy to go, but the further I went from the fire the more my heart quaked. At last I could not go further, and seeing me come to a stop the tiger crouched.

I could see his eyes gleaming, they hypnotized me, I could go neither forward nor backward.

Suddenly I heard a terrific yell and then about six yards above me I saw a pair of eyes coming down upon me. I turned and ran as no boy ever ran before or since. I did not stop until I felt something hot biting into my arm and I thought I had reached the fire. I felt a tearing pain and my eyes were blinded with a spurt of my own blood. At that instant I fell to the ground. A terrific stream of fire and ashes flew up into the sky, followed by a heart-rending yell from the tiger.

Now I felt a burning pain on my other side. Then everything became dark, and, if I may say so, I lost all interest in the whole business.

After I was nursed back to consciousness I found—at least I was told—that a part of the flesh of my left arm had been torn away by the tiger's claws; it was fortunate he had not reached the bone. Under the impact of his attack I had fallen amid the flames, and this

scorched my right side, but not very badly. Trying to secure me under him, the tiger himself had fallen into the fire, sending up such a stream of flames and ashes into the sky that he was completely hidden from Radjah and the neighbor.

When their singed eyes opened at last (I knew by looking at Radjah that his eyelashes were all burnt) they found the tiger gone and my clothes burning. They set to thrashing the flames from my garments and that burned me some more, so that I was covered with bruises, wounds and burns. They need not have told me any more. My body was aching.

Two days later news was brought to us that a lame tiger was prowling around the village, but he could do no harm to anybody for every time he leaped, instead of falling on his prey, he fell on the wrong spot. In the midst of the plague still in possession of this village, all the people talked about the tiger who sprang, not to kill, but to fall on flat ground and to yell with hunger.

## 44      Jungle Beasts and Men

Then Radjah knew what had happened. He told me. The poor tiger, when he fell into the flames, had his eyes severely burned. He had gone blind and was coming to the village, not to kill anybody, but seeking the help of man to heal his eyes. The villagers, however, were so afraid of death that they could not distinguish a blind tiger from a really fierce one.

Even today if you go to that neighborhood they will tell you that their village is distinguished by one thing. They have a blind tiger which they feed with meat from goats just as they take care of the village dogs.

As for me, after my escape my pilgrimage was abandoned for the time being that I might go to a city to have my arm attended to, and to get a much-needed rest.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MAGICIAN

## CHAPTER III

### THE MAGICIAN

**A**S soon as my wounds had healed, we resumed our journey and started for shrines in the hills. We passed through the city of Benares and here we met a famous magician. He was a strange man and he had stranger powers. If he willed it, in a half hour's time trees grew out of barren ground under our very eyes. They not only grew, but they bore fruit, for we tasted of it. Then with a sweep of the magician's hands the fruit and trees disappeared, leaving nothing, not even a mark to show that they had been there.

However, before setting forth on the magician's story, I must tell you how we found him. He was the only snake charmer who could find

## 48      Jungle Beasts and Men

snakes in places where others did not even suspect their presence. It happened at the very house where Radjah and I were stopping, a little stone house in a city of nearly two hundred thousand people. During the entire existence of this house a snake had never been seen in it or anywhere near it, for, as you know, the reptiles abound in marshes or on dry hills, but you never find them in the streets of cities or in places where many people live.

One day we were sitting in the parlor of this house. Its walls were made of marble, and its foundation of sandstone, and there was no possibility of anything getting in through the walls. Therefore what then happened in that house seems like a bit of magic. We were sitting there when we heard the snake charmer's flute, sounding its strange monotonous over and over and over again. The plaintive cry of the minor keys became unbearable, so we went out to tell the snake charmer to stop. As he saw us he said, "There is a snake in your house."



TREES GREW OUT OF BARREN GROUND UNDER OUR VERY EYES

My friend replied, "You are mistaken. This is a little pilgrim hotel, a snake has never been seen in it since it was built five hundred years ago."

"But I hear the call," said the snake charmer. "I can feel the silken movement of its coiling body somewhere."

I said, "You feel it in your head, for I tell you there is no snake in this house. We have been here nearly a week and we have seen nothing."

At this the magician only became the more insistent, saying: "Ah, but I feel its flickering tongue darting in and out of its mouth, and I seem to see its glassy eyes brooding over the darkness in which it is lying."

Laughing at him Radjah retorted, "O spinner of empty words, go thy way, amuse younger children than we, preach to men and women whose brains are like those of babes."

The snake charmer's eyes flared up as he fairly shouted, "Dost thou take me for an empty-headed juggler, boy?"

Radjah answered, "More than that! Thou art a charmer of snakes which do not exist. Hast thou a snake with poisonous fangs? Most of thy snakes have been unfanged by thee. Thou pliest thy trade in the streets, making believe that thou dost charm poisonous snakes."

"Is that a challenge?" the snake charmer asked sullenly.

"More than a challenge," my friend replied. "For thou canst not meet it!"

"Behold!" cried the snake charmer. And with a gesture of his right hand he commanded us to be silent, and began to play the flute. The flute struck minor keys, dwelling on them as if someone were slowly tearing yards and yards of silk. And of a sudden appeared a snake. It came from the corner of our room, gliding right between my friend's feet and on down from the balcony to the street where the snake charmer was standing playing his flute. There it lay still for a minute, its black head on the ground, and by the mark on its head,

a sort of white swastika, we knew it was a very poisonous snake. As the flute played on, the snake gradually lifted his head. Slowly his mouth opened and his bifurcated tongue flickered forth like flames of light. He swayed to the rhythm of the music like one smitten with delirium. The snake charmer dared not stop. He was afraid that if he stopped playing, the snake's intoxication would go and that instead of crawling back to his home, he would bite him, so he played on and on. Every now and then he would gesticulate to us with his left hand, making signs, but we did not understand him.

Suddenly he stopped playing the flute. The snake stood still for the fraction of a second, raising himself until almost two-thirds of his body was off the ground. Then with a sharp, loud hiss, he fell like a whip on the snake charmer. We thought this would be the end of the magician. For the moment, we could not make out what had happened, the snake charmer jumped away so quickly, but in a few

moments we discovered him standing still again. Something was coiling around his left hand and out of his fist arose, like a flower bud cut in two, the wide open mouth of the snake. Then the snake charmer called us to him.

When we reached him, we found that he was holding the snake by the throat, while the snake was holding him with its tail coiled around his wrist trying to break his bones. In its open mouth we could see rows of teeth covered with the pouch-like skin which serves as a sheath for the fangs, and in the corners of the mouth we could see the poisonous teeth. The snake charmer grinned at us and said, "Shall I let go of it now?"

"No! No!" I cried.

Then he said to my friend, "O thou brother of unreason, didst thou not challenge me to bring forth the snake that dwelt in thine house?"

My friend replied, "Yea, now I see it. Thou

art indeed a charmer of snakes. Forgive me for insulting thee."

"Lo," said the snake charmer, "I shall unfang it and let it go." And out of his pocket he took some pincers, pulled out the poisonous fangs and threw the snake on the ground. With that the snake relaxed its coils, lay still for a moment and then crawled out of sight.

Just then the snake charmer caught sight of my left arm. He asked, "Art thou lame in thy left arm?"

"Slightly," I answered "but it is much better now."

"I can see tiger claw marks on thine arm," he said.

I replied, "Thou seest right. But how dost thou know that I was scratched by a tiger?"

And he answered, "Dost thou not know my story?"

"What story?" asked my friend.

"The tale," he said, "that all the beggars and all the minstrels tell when they are given a penny."

## 54      Jungle Beasts and Men

"And what kind of tale may that be?" I asked.

"The tale of how my snake killed a tiger."

"But," said Radjah, "there are many tales of tigers and snakes; some are true and some are false."

The charmer answered, "But mine is a true one, though oftentimes others tell it as if it had happened to them."

He had so intrigued us that we now were all ears for his story, and so we persuaded him to tell it, inviting him to go upstairs with us. We gave him a glass of cold water and some sweetmeats, after which he spoke thus:

"How dost thou go into the jungle?"

Our perplexity was voiced by Radjah, "What is the meaning of thy words?"

He replied: "Dost thou go to the jungle like the western folks," continued the magician, "armed with firearms or dost thou go to the jungle armed with a javelin or a sword?"

Radjah answered, "I go with nothing in my hands if I go at all. But it would be wiser to

## The Magician      55

carry firearms in case thou art afraid. Our government, however, does not allow us to carry firearms."

Then the magician put another question to us: "How dost thou sleep in the jungle?"

Again Radjah spoke, for both of us, "We make a ring of fire, and lie inside of the ring. The animals are so afraid of fire, they dare not come too near."

Impatiently then I broke in, "But what is thy tale of the tiger and the snake?"

The snake charmer said, "It is so well known that thou must be very ignorant not to have heard it. It happened ten years ago: I had so tamed a snake that I did not need to take its poison fangs out of its mouth, and I became so fond of it that I gave it a sweet name. I called it Honeytoot. Honeytoot grew so attached to me that I did not have to play the flute to call it. If I merely whistled it would come near me, and if I whistled again it would glide away. There were times when I looked at it and in the depths of its glassy

eyes I could perceive speech, as one reads words in the eyes of cows and horses.

"Honeytoot and I used to go about the jungle: whenever I slept during the daytime or the dusk, Honeytoot would lie near me, and the animals would be afraid to come near us. It stood guard over me as a sentry stands guard over a king.

"One day I had gone into the jungle at midday and as I wandered in many dark places, I saw the elephants resting. The heavy midday silence of the jungle they disturbed only softly with the slow flapping of their ears. By this little undulation I could tell even before I saw them that I was approaching the dusky resting place of elephants. Then I heard the smaller animals moving about, the squirrels in the branches, the porcupines on the ground, and every now and then I would hear the bark of a deer and see a flash of gold gleaming through the trees—a stag bounding off in the distance.

"At last I came to a clearing in the wood

and, as I was very weary, I lay down. Honeytoot was with me, coiled around this arm that you saw just now in the coils of the snake. I fell asleep, but for how long I slept I do not know.

"I was awakened by a noise. It did not rouse me completely, but in a sort of waking sleep I heard the purr of a cat and the hiss of a snake alternating with each other; every now and then, the purr rose to a growl and then a hiss would follow like the sharp pain of a dagger piercing one's skin. I opened my eyes wide and looked around.

"About twenty yards away was a mound of gold, and between it and me rose the black stem of the snake's back. It resembled a lily rising out of the earth. Then as another growl pierced the silence I knew it was a tiger with which I had to deal. As I sat up, a huge jungle tiger raised his head and looked at me. He started forward. The snake's head rose higher, then shot to the ground. Honeytoot was trying to sting the tiger to death, but before the

snake could strike his enemy, the tiger had sprung back leaving Honeytoot's fangs to fall on harmless bare ground. No sooner did Honeytoot's head touch the ground than the tiger's paws tried to strike it. But Honeytoot was too quick, and the tiger's paws fell short of their mark.

"This play went on and on, Honeytoot darting out his head, quick as a flash drawing it back as the tiger's great paw came at him. Again and again they went at each other, playing at hide-and-seek with death until at last the tiger wearied of his game. When the snake saw this he let his head down and lay very still.

"I rose to my knees looking around for any possible way of escape. The nearest tree was six yards away and I calculated how long it would take me to get up it. I also calculated how long it would take the tiger to leap over the snake's head to reach me. Realizing that this way of escape was possible, I began to

whistle to Honeytoot, trying at the same time to walk backwards to the tree.

"No sooner had I moved than the tiger rushed for me. But the snake, in the same instant, raised its head, and the tiger hesitated. I, too, stopped, as I was afraid that if I made a dash for the tree the tiger with one bound would be upon me. Again the tiger aimed his paw at Honeytoot. The snake tried to sting it, but the paw was not there by the time the snake's fangs had reached the spot. The play of death began all over again between paw and fangs.

"At last, weary of waiting for the battle to end, I whistled again to the snake and again it lay flat on the ground. In that instant the tiger leaped toward me. With a shrill, sharp noise I whistled once more and like the column of an electric flame, Honeytoot shot up into the air, curling around the tiger like the swish of a whip. The whole forest seemed to shake with terror at the tiger's howl of pain, and I could hear the stampeding of the deer, the

trumpeting of the elephants in the distance, and the general cry of danger carried far and wide. Then an aching silence followed, and peace fell upon the jungle.

"All this happened quicker almost than thought itself. Before me lay the tiger, dead. The snake coiled around his neck had its fangs buried in the great beast's eye. As I moved closer I found that the snake was dead too. Honeytoot was torn and broken in the middle. At first I thought the snake's tail was coiled around the tiger's neck, but in truth what had happened, was, that the tiger in the fierce agony of the poison that the snake had put in its eye, with one last supreme effort had tried to scratch off the snake's coils, and in doing so had torn Honeytoot's body in two. My guardian had shown the courage of a human being, for even in death its tail was still fastened around the tiger's neck."

The magician had finished. He sat silent for a few moments and then asked: "Hast thou never heard this tale before?"

Radjah replied, "Yes, I have heard it. But each one who tells it says that it happened to his snake and to him. More than one snake charmer has told us this tale, and if you walk through India you will hear it told in different ways and in different places."

Nothing disturbed by this the magician retorted: "That is not so. If thou dost not believe me, come to my house tomorrow. There I shall show you so many wonders that you cannot help but believe this to be my own true story."

**CHAPTER IV**

**THE WONDER-WORKER'S HOUSE**

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WONDER-WORKER'S HOUSE

**W**E had already spent an hour in the snake charmer's house, where he had given us cool water to drink, sweet fruits to eat and cushions to rest on; all the time a woman had played soft music to us on a lute. We discovered that our host was not a proper magician at all but a rich gentleman with many servants who, instead of dabbling in private theatricals, indulged his fancy with wonder work.

Unable to control my astonishment, I asked him: "Why do you do this? No gentleman in India occupies himself with magic."

"I am no gentleman," he replied.

This I could not believe. "But you act like

## 66      Jungle Beasts and Men

one. We can tell a gentleman because we have seen some before."

He smiled and said, "That is strange. I have all the manners of a gypsy, and all the longings of a wanderer. I am no gentleman."

Then Radjah took my part. "But there is something in you," said he, "that smacks not at all of the trickster. You do magic, not as a magician does, for gain, but for study, as if you were seeking for a miracle. Tell us how you came to this."

A change passed over the magician's face. For a little he smiled more to himself than to us before he spoke. "My life has been a strange one," said he. "When I was a boy of six, gypsies came to our house one afternoon, and showed us some wonderful tricks. One of them could shoot a mango in a tree by looking at its reflection in a pool below, and another could shoot a bird flying in the air by looking at its shadow. With his eyes bent down watching the shadow cast upon the earth by a bird in its flight, his hands would yet follow so

## The Wonder-worker's House 67

unerringly the bird itself that the arrow would always go straight home to its mark.

"The last trick they played was the one of the elephant—it thrilled me most. They said, 'Here is an elephant; see it come.' The great beast walked right through our midst, and there before us it went through its paces and then disappeared. Then the gypsies told us that it was all magic, that there had been really no elephant at all.

"When the gypsies left, I stealthily walked out of the house and followed them. They took me with them, and I never expected to see my home again. Fate would not have it so.

"Thirty years later I came back to this village to perform, myself, some of the things of magic I had now become master of. I was brought to the manor house and shown the courtyard where I was expected to give my exhibition. Little by little it came over me that I had seen this place before. I asked the lady of the house, who was the sole owner of the manor, if she would let me see its interior.

## 68      Jungle Beasts and Men

From room to room, from balcony to balcony, I wandered, and then, coming down from the roof, I turned to the lady and remarked, 'I am certain that I lived here in the past.' To prove this, I told her the names of three or four relics which would be found in different rooms.

"'Why, those belong to my son, whom we lost thirty years ago,' the lady exclaimed.

"'How did you lose him?' I asked.

"'A long time ago a band of gypsies came here,' she said, 'and when they left, they kidnapped our son. He was the only one we had. We searched everywhere, but never found him. This broke my husband's heart, and in a little while he died. But I live on year after year, hoping from day to day that my son will come back at last to live here, and to take possession of his own house.'

"'Would you recognize him?' I asked.

"'Assuredly I would,' she answered. 'There is a red mark on his left shoulder blade.'

"'At that I tore open my shirt and showed

## The Wonder-worker's House 69

her the mark. 'Is that what it looks like?' I asked.

"'It is indeed the mark,' she cried, 'and thou art indeed my son. Where hast thou been?'

"'I do not feel like a son to thee, old woman,' I protested. 'I will bring the old gypsy to you, and he will tell you if this is true.'

"'To the outskirts of the village I sent for him whom I had always believed to be my own father. When he arrived and told the tale that I have just told you, he vouched for the fact that I was the same child that was lost to this house thirty years before.

"'That was ten years ago. I am now forty-six,' he said, "and I weary of the life of the householder, so, whenever the desire for wandering seizes me, I leave my house and go into the heart of the town and perform things of magic in the market place. Thus I get over my longing for the purple silence of the road and the dim depths of the jungle.

"'Now I shall show you some wonders,' he

## 70      Jungle Beasts and Men

said, as he made some preparations with the help of the servants who had come in response to his summons. As he busied himself, he remarked: "It is wiser that I am practicing my magic on solid ground and not in a room, for then you will believe I am no common trickster, but that I am showing you the genuine performance of the real artist."

We went downstairs into the open, and passed on to the lawn. At first he merely exhibited the skill of the ordinary fakir.

After this had been going on for some time to our great entertainment, he said, "Look at the trees and remember to keep one leaf fixed in mind."

With that he took his bow and arrow and sent the arrow spinning through the air bringing down the leaf that I had concentrated upon. Then he said the same thing to Radjah and brought down the leaf he was thinking of.

After that he did another thing at which we marveled greatly.

Turning to me he asked, "Have you ever

## The Wonder-worker's House    71

shot three arrows into the air and brought them down one standing on top of the other?"

"I do not understand you," I said.

"I shall show you," he answered. "I shall shoot one arrow into the air. It will fall to the earth, and will stand straight up. Then I shall shoot the second and it will come down straight, striking into the end of the first arrow. I shall shoot the third and again this one will rise up high in the air, turn and end its swift downward flight exactly on the tip of the second arrow, so that the three arrows will be like one great arrow upright in the ground."

"I would believe it of no one else, but I do believe it of you," said Radjah.

"I am glad that you no longer doubt me," answered the magician. "Watch this."

He shot off the first arrow. It went up in a straight line, and came down to fall with its head buried deep in the ground, the arrow vibrating slightly. Then as it ceased to tremble, he shot another arrow into the air.

## 72 Jungle Beasts and Men

The second one went up, came down and fell on the upper end of the first one. The two arrows vibrating for a moment, then standing still. Now he shot the third one, and this last one rose and fell landing on the end of the second arrow, all exactly as had been promised.

"This is archery," said the magician, "and not a trick. I will teach you how to do it if you like."

It was true. The arrows were there, three of them, standing squarely one upon the other as tall as an elephant two years old.

Then said our new friend, "If you tie my eyes, and take a drum a short distance away, beating it just once, I will pierce the drum with my very first arrow."

We tied his eyes and then placed a drum about a hundred yards away from him. Just once we beat the drum and he straightway shot his arrow up into the air. There was a gentle throb and we saw that the arrow had pierced the drum.

He did some more strange things of this

## The Wonder-worker's House 73

sort, and then turned to do card tricks and mind reading. In the midst of this, while our minds were lost to everything else, he suddenly gasped, "Lo and behold! a tiger is coming among us."

And so it was. We heard the panting of a tiger, and there was a stench in the air such as you always smell in the jungle where a tiger has passed. Then we heard a soft growl. A tiger was walking toward us. It came and lay down on the ground and purred like a cat. After a while with one bound it had vanished into space. We were startled and frightened, and yet we knew it was a trick. We asked our host whether it was really a tiger.

He answered, "No. As the snake in your house in Benares which I charmed with my flute playing was not real, so neither is this tiger."

"What!" exclaimed Radjah and I as one, in sheer astonishment.

"It is very simple. I played the flute in your house till you were hypnotized and then

## 74      Jungle Beasts and Men

you saw that snake as I showed it to you. But you did not really see that snake, you only imagined you saw it. In the same way today I did those feats with my bow and arrow, and then the card tricks to hold your attention. Once I had your complete attention and your imagination, even, was under my control, fatigued as were your minds after hours of concentration, you were simply hypnotized. After that it was easy to show you anything. All I had to do was to suggest it to your imagination in a skilful way and you imagined it. In fact there was no tiger within three hundred miles of this place, neither tiger nor leopard nor any wildcat."

"Is it true, then," I asked him, "that the elephant trick that beguiled you when you were six years old was only a trick?"

The magician would not say yes or no, but in his own way answered me thus: "In the olden writings, if you read the utterances of Shankaracharya, you would find continuous mention of the fact that the appearances dis-

## The Wonder-worker's House    75

appear before reality, as magic elephants disappear through magic. This trick used to be very common among the people, but the magicians of recent time do not maintain the former greatness of their brothers and the feat is now almost lost. The only man of modern times that knew it was my foster father and he tried to teach it to me. People are so susceptible to fear that by appealing to this sense you can easily suggest to them unrealities of terror. But it is another thing to convince them of the presence of an object which attracts them such as a splendid elephant or a beautiful flower. For what is admired or loved does not frighten them. Therefore, it is much easier to suggest and make them see a terrifying tiger than to suggest and make them see an elephant, which is a truly noble and lovable beast."

By this time the dusk was falling and we wanted to go back to the city. Our host said, "If you like, I will take you to the next city

76      Jungle Beasts and Men

and there show you some things. Then you can go on your way."

We took leave of him that afternoon, expecting him to join us the following morning to accompany us on our pilgrimage.

CHAPTER V

THE TALE OF THE PYTHON

## CHAPTER V

### THE TALE OF THE PYTHON

**T**HE following morning the magician accompanied us to the next city and as we journeyed he told us the following tale:

“The gypsies are a strange people, no doubt, and yet few strange things do actually befall them. They wander about from town to town and country to country, seeming always to expect that unheard-of and most surprising things will happen to them. But it’s a queer thing in life that the more you look for the surprising the less you find it. So those years that I spent with the gypsies, for the most part, were utterly wasted in looking for the surprising and the miraculous. However, once or twice astounding things did happen.

"Once I remember we were near the Himalayas, and a beautiful deer came rushing into our little improvised gypsy village where some five hundred of us were dwelling. We had built our tents, dug holes in the ground and had made up our minds to stay there. The deer rushed upon us, panting, and foaming with sweat. At sight of us it stopped short, trembling in its agony. All the gypsy children ran to it and we were surprised to notice that the approach of the children far from frightening it seemed to calm it as though it were seeking comradeship.

"We older ones ran out to learn what was causing all the commotion among the children. We heard a growl in the distance, and it became quite clear that the deer had been chased by a tiger. Then we made such a noise with our five hundred voices that it frightened the tiger away and we heard no more of him.

"Soon after the deer fell upon the ground. She was breathing hard, and her eyes began to water; we knew that she was going to give

birth to a little one. We watched over her, making fires around her so that she would not catch cold and die at the birth of her fawn. After several hours the tiny deer was born, and we could read a tender light in the mother's eyes as she looked at us trying to express her thanks. No human mother could have been more tender than was that animal to her offspring as she licked it carefully with her tongue.

"Mother and fawn became a part of our family. They used to go rambling about with us, the mother always keeping her little one with her. But after a time they took to going back to the jungle each day, setting out in the morning, not to return until dusk.

"One day when the mother and fawn had come back from the jungle about four o'clock, the children began to play with the little one while the mother followed me into the forest. I fully expected to get back in an hour or two. But after we had gone a short distance, the smell and the beauty of the jungle called to

## 82      Jungle Beasts and Men

the deer and I saw that she was trying to hide from me. I understood that she did not want me to see her and molest her, so I let her go. Now and then I would see her emerge from the trees and leaves only to bound away again into the underbrush and to disappear completely from view.

"As this went on for an hour and more I was beginning to feel very frightened because with the night coming on, all the tigers and beasts of prey were waking up from their sleep and were preparing to venture out of their lairs. So I whistled for the deer, for like the snake, a deer will respond to certain notes. I realized, however, that whistling was dangerous, as it gave away the fact that a man was in the land of the animals—and all the jungle animals fear and hate men.

"Though the deer came to me and began to follow me back, I knew that something was amiss, for I heard strange movements in the grass as if tiger cubs were following us, sniffing the air and tracking us down. Now and

## The Tale of the Python      83

again in the grass we could see the snout of an animal. They were sniffing and looking to see who it was that was disturbing the jungle at that hour.

"As the time went on, voices arose from out of the grass singing more shrilly, parrots and other colored birds chirped and screeched in the treetops, flocks of many colored wings flew about and disappeared as the twilight settled over the jungle. In the gloom we felt unknown beasts pressing about us. The deer hastened her steps and I followed as fast as I could. As we thus hurried on I noticed that a short distance away from us the grass was moving in waves like the stripes of a tiger. When a tiger prowls in the jungle the grass moves in exactly the pattern of the tiger's black stripes, but this time the grass shivered as if something near the roots were shaking from fever. It seemed to tremble from the very roots up. Grass only trembles halfway down its stem when a tiger is about, but this was different. I became frightened, for I was

sure that there in the grass was some kind of an animal waiting to pounce upon us. I whistled again, but the deer instead of coming at my call stood stock still, trembling all over. I could see her nostrils twitch and her head go down as if something were pulling her nose. She seemed almost to sink to the ground.

"I climbed up a tree and looked down from a branch, and there before me lay an enormous python. With its eyes within seven yards of the eyes of the deer, it had hypnotized her. Each time the deer moved, the python would uncoil its whole body and would rise, then fall like a thick, heavy whip with a sinister thud. Then it would coil up again, and lie quite still. I knew that the deer was doomed, once she moved, for the python would coil itself around her and kill her.

"As I watched, horror-stricken and fairly breathless, suddenly I saw two tawny eyes gazing at the deer from the back. I could see above the eyes spots of black, and I knew it was a tiger. In front of the deer was the

python, and behind her was the tiger, so I knew by this that the deer had lost her only chance of escape. The python was crawling nearer and nearer, but the poor beast stood paralyzed and trembling. Her muscles strained, her nerves twitched, and yet her legs refused to move.

"At last, like a thread stretched too far, something within the deer snapped, and she leaped into the air; the same instant the tiger's roar and the swish of the python's head could be heard drowning out the pitiful, almost human little cry of the deer as they both fell on their prey. The python had coiled half of its length around the hind quarters of the deer, and with its other half had encircled the tiger which had also fallen upon the deer. Between the deer's feeble efforts to escape and the tiger's tenacity in holding her back, the python's head, which normally was nine inches in diameter, was stretched to the thinness of a rope, yet it did not loose its hold.

"Finally the deer's back was broken, and

## 86      Jungle Beasts and Men

she began to sink. Now that the deer was mortally wounded, the python uncoiled its tail from around her, attempting to get a firmer hold on the tiger. Darkness came upon us, and all I could discern was the deer's body twitching slightly in the throes of death, but I had little attention to give to my poor pet then, what with the excitement of the conflict I was witnessing and the terrifying roars of the tiger which were echoing among the distant hills. As I slid down the tree and attempted to escape, I saw before me the python's tail coiled around the tiger's body, and the tiger struggling with all his force to free himself. Then, with the terrible weight of the python still around him, the tiger leaped and fell against a tree three yards away. The impact loosened the python's grip for a moment and in that instant the tiger's claws gripped the middle of the python's body.

"Both ends of the python rose in mid-air, attempting to encircle the tiger, but somehow the python failed in this. The tiger now bit

## The Tale of the Python      87

into the python's back, and the pain must have been intense, for I could see that the python made a supreme effort. It succeeded in coiling its tail around the left hind leg of the tiger, who howled with pain as his leg broke. That decided me. I ventured nearer and taking good aim threw my jungle knife at the python's head. It struck right under the head and the python loosed its grasp and lay still. With one or two more bites, the tiger finished it, but the python's tail still encircled the tiger's hind leg.

"The tiger gazed at me like a brother as I came near him. He did not hurt me; he did not growl, but looked at me pitifully, asking for help. I could give him no help, so I moved away and he with his three legs and the python trailing behind him, followed me to the village. It was fortunate that the tiger was with me for it was dark by now and wild animals would have attacked me had I not been in his good company.

"When we reached the village, we saw many lights, I could hear voices calling and see

## 88      Jungle Beasts and Men

torches being brandished in the air. I called to the villagers and they heard me. The tiger gave a growl but continued to follow. At last, I arrived with him at the village and told the people my tale. The dead python was still clinging to the tiger's leg. Since snakes seem to live in more than one spot, we had to literally hack the python to pieces to release the tiger's leg.

"The tiger in his agony set up such a howling that the little deer took fright and ran away to be seen no more by any of us. We tried to help the tiger but he would not let us get near him, and toward morning he became very angry with us, making efforts to bite us. We realized he was dying, so we brought two big hammers and hit him on the head, putting an end to his misery at once.

"We cremated the python and the tiger separately and all day long we searched for the little deer, who had run away from us when it heard the tiger's howls. Our search

## The Tale of the Python      89

was in vain, for no one knows to this day where she went.

"As to the dead mother of the little deer, it was useless to look for her in the jungle. Some animal or other had eaten her up during the night."

"Can pythons be charmed?" I asked the magician.

"No," he said. "No one has tried to charm a python, although little ones, about ten feet long, I think, could be charmed, but not the big ones—why, I do not know."

Just then we heard a hiss at our feet, and there on the road lay a king cobra within six feet of us. We did not know what to do and as we stood still, he slid toward us like black lightning, and in a moment his head was raised and he was on the verge of stinging me. I closed my eyes and waited for death. The whole world looked black, but since I felt no pain, I opened my eyes, and lo and behold! the magician was holding it by the throat, its tail was coiled around his wrist, and with his other

hand the magician took out a knife and struck it on the head. Off went the head, leaving his hand bathed in blood.

The tail slowly uncoiled and he threw the dead snake away, and remarked: "The nature of a snake is strange. You can charm it. You can love it, and yet there are moments when it will sting you. There is no such thing as a snake charmer who does not dread that sooner or later he will be killed by a snake."

"Have you ever seen a snake charmer killed by a snake?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered, "many times. That is why most snake charmers pull off the snakes' poisonous fangs as soon as they start to grow. And that makes the game so safe that I do not consider them snake charmers. But those who handle real snakes in fifty cases out of a hundred die from snake bites."

"You said a little while ago that one or two extraordinary things had happened to you," Radjah remarked. "Do tell us about them."

"I told you the most interesting one," he answered.

But Radjah insisted, "What was the next most interesting one?"

"Well, that had nothing to do with animals. That had to do with men," replied the magician.

"We should like to hear about men; we are weary of animals," Radjah encouraged him.

"A steady diet of snake is tiresome," he replied, "but you know human beings are worse than snakes and are as dangerous as tigers."

"No, I did not know that," I said.

"Yes, they are," he answered. "Look at that town we are about to enter. There it is. You notice people bathing in the water. But before they bathe, they touch the water three times with their heads and then with their hand put more water on their heads, after which they go in to bathe. That is their way of praying to the water.

"They say, 'O holy and pure water, we are going to bathe in thee and wash away our

## 92      Jungle Beasts and Men

impurities. Forgive us for disgracing thee like this.'

"And then they look at the sun and say: 'O blossom of Eastern silence. Purify our thoughts as you purify the world.'

"When evening comes, these same people will go into the chapels and have the epics and the scriptures, like the Râmâyana and the Mahâbhârata and the Gîta read to them. Now the Gîta says: 'Unless you consider others as good as yourself and treat them accordingly, you will never attain religion.' This is one of the teachings of Hindu philosophy.

"Then it goes on to say: 'You must love the world with a love that has no cause.' This is another teaching that you are taught.

"And yet there are human beings in that town who are vicious and terrible. Look how the peacocks strut about the paths as the afternoon sun floats away in the air. Watch the iridescent throats on the pigeons as they walk up and down the cornices. And then that monkey, do you see him? There are lots of

## The Tale of the Python      93

monkeys who leave the houses at night and climb into the treetops to sleep, and you will find if you sleep in the open that now and then a monkey will come and pull at your blankets, making you think a spirit is abroad.

"But now for my story.

"We were gypsy folks traveling to a town which we reached at dusk, but as we neared it a caravan appeared, made up of seven or eight different kinds of people. They joined us and we all entered the town together. We installed ourselves in a dilapidated section of the village, planning to sleep there the night, and as we lit our fires, set up our tents and prepared our supper, the moon shone down on us. In India, as you know, nobody cooks at dusk and nobody lights a fire during that moment of silence. Between the sunset and the first flush of the brilliant stars, it is customary not to disturb the silence. People sit still and meditate and try to listen to the voice of silence. We never place a light high above us. We generally put it on the floor because

## 94      Jungle Beasts and Men

man is supposed to be humble and not insolent enough to place a light high up as if to challenge the stars. The stars have their moods and they might get angry and fall from the sky.

"As we lit our fires after the hour of meditation the moon looked down upon us, shedding a light like silver. From out shadows so thick that they resembled chalices of black silence, two men stopped and came to my door, that is to say, to the entrance of my little tent, as I was the son of the chief of the gypsies. One of the men spoke to me and said, 'Will you cast our fortunes?'

"I will tell you good and evil, and truth which is even more, because truth is neither good nor evil. It is more than that; it is perfume for the nostrils of the gods.'

"So I took the first man's hand and I said, 'I will read the back of your hand and not the palm.'

"And I looked at the hand and drew lines on the ground in the silent moonlight. Then

## The Tale of the Python      95

I saw that instead of drawing lines I was drawing streaks of blood. And I commenced to say a prayer. Then to the man I said, 'Your heart is set on murder.'

"The man trembled and said to me in anger, 'Thou liest.'

" 'Lie it be, then,' I replied, 'but I see in your soul. I am telling you the truth that I see in your soul.'

"In even greater anger he said, 'Thou vile thief! Say one more word and I will kill thee.'

"But his friend intervened and said, 'Silence, brother. We came to him, not he to us, and we bound him to tell the truth. What he thinks to be the truth, that you have heard, and now you do not like it. Will you look at my hand, O wanderer of all lands, and tell me what you see?'

"I took his hand and said, 'I will look at the palm of thy hand and study the lines therein.'

"After which I said to him, 'Go not with

## 96      Jungle Beasts and Men

your friend tonight. If you go with him, you will lose your life.'

"At this, he laughed. Then they both said to me, 'Thou art mistaken, brother.'

"I replied, 'Perhaps I am mistaken, but will you take the advice of a mad man and abide by it? Do not go together tonight.'

"They said, 'No. We will not abide by your advice but will travel together, and no man can stop us.'

"Then I said, 'Will you take me with you?'

"And they replied, 'Why dost thou desire to go?'

" 'Perhaps I can prevent you from wrong doing,' I answered.

"Then the two men held council under their breath and they decided that I should accompany them. But mind you, I was a lad of nineteen, and they were older men, and still I went unarmed, knowing that murder was in the heart of one of these men.

"After wandering for some time, we came to the house of the zamindar, where there was

## The Tale of the Python      97

celebration of the second anniversary of the marriage and of the homecoming of the zamindar's son with the daughter of a zamindar from another town. There was dancing going on there, and, judging from the eyes of the dancers and musicians and those of my two companions, I realized that the caravan that had come with us was a caravan of robbers and that they had all entered this house under the pretense of being dancers and musicians hired for the occasion.

"All the family jewels were on display, heirlooms which had been bought by blood in battle, through victory.

"There were strange amethysts burning like snakes' eyes, and there were emeralds flashing like pigeons' throats.

"All this I noticed, and it made me wonder what was coming next.

"The dancing continued, the beautiful bride, in all her jewels, came out once to show her face to the people, the torches were burning on the roof, and the whole village was as-

## 98      Jungle Beasts and Men

sembled there. It seemed as though the colors of many rainbows had gone into the making of the clothes of the guests. Great baskets of reeds were filled with sweetmeats. I could hear the jingle of the women's anklets and the song of the singers, and I could also hear strange whispers from dark corners, where the robber folks made ready.

"Because I was only a lad at the time, I did not know very much, but I did know how to hypnotize people, so I said suddenly to the lord of the house, 'I am a gypsy, your Honor. I wish to add to your entertainment. Will you let me perform here?'"

"And he replied, 'Indeed I shall, and gladly.'

"So I began to do my tricks. First I said, 'Bring all the ornaments and the heirlooms to me here.'

"The guests were surprised, but somehow they were so gay that nothing mattered as long as the trick was done, and I took both the ornaments and jewels and did my trick.

## The Tale of the Python      99

One by one from their sight the ornaments vanished, where to, I will tell you later.

"After this I said, 'Search the house and bring me all the weapons.' And all the weapons were brought forward, little daggers, and strange knives, and I went around them seven times and made my circles of charm, till one by one, the weapons, too, disappeared from sight.

" 'Now,' I said, 'there is one sword missing and this sword must be brought forth.'

"The guests replied that no more swords were about, but I knew from the murderer's eyes that he had not given up his sword, but had hidden it. Then I realized that the best thing to do was to arm the household, for of course I knew that the musicians had not given up their arms at all.

"I told the lord of the house that he would find the weapons under the bride's couch. 'Go arm your household,' I said, 'with swords and daggers, and have them ready for the robbers who are about.'

## 98      Jungle Beasts and Men

sembled there. It seemed as though the colors of many rainbows had gone into the making of the clothes of the guests. Great baskets of reeds were filled with sweetmeats. I could hear the jingle of the women's anklets and the song of the singers, and I could also hear strange whispers from dark corners, where the robber folks made ready.

"Because I was only a lad at the time, I did not know very much, but I did know how to hypnotize people, so I said suddenly to the lord of the house, 'I am a gypsy, your Honor. I wish to add to your entertainment. Will you let me perform here?'"

"And he replied, 'Indeed I shall, and gladly.'

"So I began to do my tricks. First I said, 'Bring all the ornaments and the heirlooms to me here.'

"The guests were surprised, but somehow they were so gay that nothing mattered as long as the trick was done, and I took both the ornaments and jewels and did my trick.

## The Tale of the Python      99

One by one from their sight the ornaments vanished, where to, I will tell you later.

"After this I said, 'Search the house and bring me all the weapons.' And all the weapons were brought forward, little daggers, and strange knives, and I went around them seven times and made my circles of charm, till one by one, the weapons, too, disappeared from sight.

"'Now,' I said, 'there is one sword missing and this sword must be brought forth.'

"The guests replied that no more swords were about, but I knew from the murderer's eyes that he had not given up his sword, but had hidden it. Then I realized that the best thing to do was to arm the household, for of course I knew that the musicians had not given up their arms at all.

"I told the lord of the house that he would find the weapons under the bride's couch. 'Go arm your household,' I said, 'with swords and daggers, and have them ready for the robbers who are about.'

"And he grew white with terror. I said, 'I am a magician, but I am a honest one. I am telling you the truth.' And while I was talking, the zamindar sent his servants in search of their weapons. Meanwhile, to keep the robbers from noticing anything, I said, 'I will show you a trick that you have never seen before.'

" 'Right here in your midst, on this marble floor, I will make a tree grow, and more than that, I will light a flame and this flame will have the power to draw out the hidden sword. It will be the flame that is magnetic.'

"So I went on with my charms. The tree grew and bore fruit and they ate the fruit and knew by this that it was a real tree growing in a marble floor, and then the tree vanished. By this time I knew that the household was armed. But as I lit the fire, the eyes of the murderer were nowhere to be seen. The flame gradually hypnotized all the people, and little by little the robbers' swords began to come out. But there was one man who was

not there, and there was one sword missing from the side of the flame.

"Suddenly I heard the robber cry 'Rhea, rhea, rhea,' and that broke the hypnotic spell. The flame had gone but the robbers' weapons were lying where they had been all the time, and with one swift movement I took them and threw them behind me in the direction of the hall, where the household stood. As I did this, the robbers saw that they had been outwitted. Then followed a scramble for the arms and a terrible onslaught ensued.

"I saw a sword flash behind my head and I immediately recognized it as the sword belonging to the murderer, and I realized that there was no escape. I stood there trembling and as I sought to move away, I saw the sword curve around and fall on the shoulder of a man. And then it rose again and fell upon my shoulder. Look at the wound, and the mark of it." [And indeed there was a scar on his shoulder.]

Then he continued. "But at that instant

## 102 Jungle Beasts and Men

things began to grow dark around me, and I heard as I lay half unconscious the townspeople and the lord of the house calling to each other while they fought against the robbers.

"When at last I regained consciousness, I found myself in a lovely bed in the zamindar's great house. He told me what had ensued after I fainted on that dreadful night. It turned out to be true that the robbers had gone to his house to rob him. It was true that by my tricks I had enabled the household to arm themselves. It was also true that the fight had ended in the robbers being beaten and the household being victorious, but in the course of the fight, the zamindar nephew was killed by a sword cut through his shoulder. After my host had told me all this, I said to him, 'Can you have me carried to where this dead man lies, because if you can I will tell you his story which perhaps you do not know.'

"So they carried me with great difficulty to the courtyard where more than one dead body



THEN FOLLOWED A SCRAMBLE FOR THE ARMS, AND A TERRIBLE  
ONSLAUGHT ENSUED

## The Tale of the Python 103

was lying, and there was one near whose dead body a woman was moaning and weeping and beating her head with her hands, and crying to her god asking why her sinless son had been attacked.

“And when I saw the face of this dead man, I knew who it was. It was the second one of the men who had come to me to have their fortunes told. This one had been covetous, and now that his corpse was in the presence of his mother, I could not tell his story. But I told my host later on that this young man had been in the company of the robber caravan and wanting his uncle’s, my host’s, wealth, he had brought the caravan to his house in order that they might rob him.

“Then the zamindar exclaimed, ‘How terrible! It is true that he took it upon himself to hire a company of dancers and musicians for the occasion of celebrating my son’s wedding anniversary and the homecoming of my daughter-in-law. Now I see that he coveted my wealth and wanted to bring

## 104     Jungle Beasts and Men

murderers and robbers into my house. But he lies there killed by the sword of the man that sought to smite you.'

"I told him the rest of my story just as I have told it to you. And I said, 'It is far better that that one man is dead than that your whole household should be killed and robbed.'

"After this he said, 'What can I give you?'

"I answered him, 'Nothing. I am a wanderer. I am looking for surprising things to happen, but they never happen to me.'

"Then my host asked, 'How did you hypnotize all my guests? You took away my gems and heirlooms; where are they? We have searched in vain for them.'

"They are here in your house,' I said, 'you must go and find them. Did you find the swords where I directed you to look for them?'

"Yes,' said my host. 'That was strange. How did you do it?'

"I replied, 'We are a brotherhood of magicians having a death oath which forbids us to divulge our secrets to anyone except those

## The Tale of the Python     105

who belong to the fraternity. India is full of magicians, and magicians are not holy men, but men who have taken up the vocation of magic. They are as necessary as tax collectors and servants.'

"But where are my gems?' asked the zamindar.

"Go, look for them where they always are,' I answered.

"Dost thou mean that the heirlooms are in the family chest locked up?' he asked. 'And dost thou mean that the ornaments are on the women's bodies?'

"Yes,' I replied, 'they are.'

"And when he went and looked at the treasure chest which was still locked, he found all his gems, and his women-folk vouched that their ornaments were on them."

After the magician had finished his story, Radjah asked him, "How did you do it, and can you not do it now?"

"Yes, I can," he answered. "You have a

## 106     Jungle Beasts and Men

few rupees on your person. Now look at me and stand here." And we looked at him.

"Will you give me your money?" he said. After we had done this, he said, "Here are the sacks of money." Then he said, "Now they are yonder under the dust and the leaves of the autumn-stricken tree that you see in the distance." And we went with him, all three walking together, and indeed, there was our money under the dust and leaves, lying on the ground.

By this time we were almost in the city, so the magician said, "I will go with you no further. The city you are going to is the place where I performed my magic. No one knows me there and what is more I must go home."

So we bade him farewell at the entrance to the city, and in the gathering gloom of the twilight we saw him disappear. As we too felt the hour of twilight descending upon us, we sat down to pray and meditate on God. And the silence rose like walls around us, and it was so profound and still that when a leaf

## The Tale of the Python     107

fell, it seemed to scratch this wall of silence before falling on the ground. We both sat still and meditated until the stars came out and until we heard the conch shell blowing in the distance, telling the people that the hour of meditation had passed. Then we went upon our way.

**CHAPTER VI**  
**THE HOUSE OF THE NOBLE**

## CHAPTER VI

### THE HOUSE OF THE NOBLE

ON entering the town we walked through the bazaar. The night was crystal clear. The sky was full of stars which seemed almost near enough for us to reach if we stood on tiptoe and stretched out our hands. We saw women pass in dresses of saffron and gold, which, as they walked by in the light of the bazaar, gleamed like waters of many colors. The continual beat of feet of men all about us sounded like the pounding of the heart of God. Here and there a shopkeeper would cry out shrilly, praising his own goods, and then the shouts of the bargaining would come to us—mingled with the whiff of a curse. All about were green

## 112    Jungle Beasts and Men

vegetables piled up like grass-covered mountains, and fruits in great pyramids of color.

One man was selling muslin, and we heard him say, "I wove it with my own hands. It took me twenty days, and I call it the 'morning dew.' Buy my 'morning dew,' and it will make you happy whenever you wear it."

At another booth a man was selling shawls and he called them each the 'lover's hand.' "In winter," he said, "the shawl will warm you as the hand of a lover."

Then, passing on, we came to the potter, whose lovely pots of many colors and many shapes he was extolling as "the homing place of milk."

As we passed out of the bazaar we saw the camel caravan just preparing to rest for the night. In the gloaming the camel's heads rose like giants' hands probing the dark as the camel drivers sang:

"I have seen the desert gleam like the lion's eye. I have heard the sky whisper like a seashell of black, and tonight I seek the loveliness

## The House of the Noble    113

of your gaze. Tonight I want the friendship of my bride; she is more silent than the desert, and her speech is taller than the hills."

The song followed us as we walked on to the next town, where we went from door to door asking for shelter. But the people said that they had already given their share of hospitality for the night. So we wandered on till at last we reached the house of Rathor, a nobleman, whose family dates back to the eleventh century with a history of bravery and suffering. But the family is poor now, having nothing left but forty acres of land, out of which fourteen members of the family draw sustenance and support.

As we shook the chain that hung from the front door, it tinkled like a bell. A servant came and asked us who we were. "We are mendicant priests," we replied. "We seek hospitality for the night." Then he said, "Wait while I go to my master to ask him if he can give you shelter."

In a few moments we heard voices from

## 114     Jungle Beasts and Men

within the house, and then a white-bearded gentleman came and stood before us and said, "No one goes away from the house of Rathor. We would rather give our lives than refuse hospitality to strangers." I inquired of him why he had such respect for strangers? And the Rathor answered, "The stranger might be God, and we do not want him to walk by us without giving him what we have. Come, bathe your feet and cool your faces, and we shall have many talks, and sweet repose."

We entered the house. It was a miracle of marble whiteness. The walls, covered with lotus designs in red dye, were polished till they ceased to shine, but remained white like the tusks of an elephant. The floor was made of flagstones of the smoothness of silk, for they had acquired this from their six hundred years of wear by naked feet.

Upon the floor stood a stove in which, according to custom, the fire of love and of family had been kept alive since the first bride and groom had lighted it when the house had

## The House of the Noble     115

been built; over this undying fire, milk was simmering in a pan, for thus in the hot climate of India every household keeps its milk to prevent it turning sour. As a special mark of honor, we were given refreshment from the family milk pan after we had first bathed our feet and washed our hands and faces.

Then we were served a very delectable meal of mangos, grapes from Persia and nuts from the northern countries.

It was, while we ate, a great joy to have the boys and girls of the family and their mother sit around us and ask us many questions about the places and sights we had seen and the sounds we had heard. They asked us to talk to them, but we were too tired to say very much for their entertainment. The head of the family relieved us of the necessity of exertion by telling us the story of his family.

"It was our family," said Rathor, "who first offered resistance to the Mohammedans. The Mohammedans wanted to convert India to Mohammed. In order to do this, they went

about killing the men in battle, and then attempted to capture the women, but the women burned themselves alive in order to escape from the conquerors. From that time on till the year 1832, which was the Indian span of Mohammedan rule, Indian women burned themselves alive as soon as their protectors died."

The Rathor continued, "Seven hundred years ago our family went through the most terrible burning of its women that had ever been known in all India. It was at a time when the Mohammedans came and laid siege to our mountain city. It was the heroism of a boy of thirteen that saved the situation. The Mohammedans had laid siege, but they could not conquer us. To the city they sent a messenger who said, 'We will not lift the siege until you give us one thing.' The Hindus asked, 'What is this thing that you want?' And the messenger replied, 'We want your queen as captive to take back as a present to our general and king.'" Even at this late

date, Rathor's eyes gleamed with anger as he told the story.

He continued: "When the demand reached the ears of the queen, she remarked, 'It is indeed better that I should go, for then the siege will be raised from my people.' At this sentence the king was aghast. 'No!' he said, 'it shall not be!' But the queen was determined, 'It must be, my lord. You are the people's king. I am their queen. As you have a duty to them, so also have I. As a king lives by sacrifice for his people, so also must I live and sacrifice myself for my people. I will go and no one can stop me.'

"The graybeards were called to the palace in consultation, but they could think of nothing wiser to be done. So on that very day in a litter the queen was borne out by eight young men and followed by three or four hundred palanquins, carrying her retinue of servants, such as her chamber maids and ladies-in-waiting. All the palanquin doors were shut and their windows were closed as the procession

## 118     Jungle Beasts and Men

passed through the city gates and started out on their march.

"After six days they reached the capital of the Mohammedans in the north. The Mohammedan army entered the city with them and shut the city gates. For protection against battering rams their gates were covered with long sharp spikes about six inches in diameter which stuck out from every door. As soon as the last Mohammedan soldier and the last palauquin had entered the city, all these enormous spike-covered doors closed behind the queen and her retinue.

"But there is justice in this world, and woman's honor must be upheld. No sooner had the gates been closed than against the dusty distance could be seen the vast elephant cavalry of the Hindus coming in great haste to rescue their queen. As they came up to the city, they found that the spiked gates were closed and that the walls which were twenty feet tall and six feet thick were impossible to scale or to break down.

## The House of the Noble     119

"The Mohammedan king and all his soldiers came up to receive the queen, and as her palauquin door was opened all the soldiers laid aside their arms. The queen of the Hindus stepped out and when they saw the marvel of her face, they were startled by the beauty and majesty of it. Then out of the other palauquins, which amounted to several hundred, leaped men who threw away their disguise as chamber maids and ladies-in-waiting, and attacked the Mohammedans. But these were only a few hundred men and a terrible carnage ensued, the noise of which could be heard outside the gates where the Hindu army faced the impregnable walls.

"The elephants tried to ram down the gates, but it was impossible for them to do so because of the spikes. What was to be done? The noise and the clamor of battle was growing louder, and the shrieks and wails of the wounded could be heard from within. Everybody trembled. The elephants could not break down the walls.

"Suddenly my ancestor, whose name was Badal, a boy of thirteen cried, 'I know the way.' And all the Hindu armies outside the Mohammedan city were staggered when they heard the trumpet ordering them to be silent.

" 'Oh, alas,' moaned the king, 'there is no way to win. The issue is lost. My few hundred people are being butchered within the walls of the Mohammedan city and my queen, too, will be killed.'

"But the boy cried, 'O king, I know a way. Let one elephant turn his back toward the city gate and then walk backwards, and by walking backwards he will bring his great weight against the gate and ram it down and we shall then be able to get into the city.'

" 'The spikes will hurt the elephant's back,' said the king, 'and then he will never dare overcome his hurt and beat those gates down.'

" 'But,' Badal replied, 'suppose we protect the elephant's back with something.'

" 'But with what, child?' asked the king.

"And Badal answered, 'We can bind some-

thing around the hindquarters of the elephant so that the sharp spikes will bury themselves in this. Then the elephant will be able to push and break down the gate. Otherwise, we cannot save the queen. I will climb up and stand against the spikes with my back to them and the elephant seeing me there will walk backwards and will try to crush me against the door. The spikes will pierce me, but the elephant's back will be saved, and by being saved from pain, he will go on pushing till he opens the gate.'

"At this the king's face grew white with amazement, but he said not a word. Badal exclaimed, 'Break the silence, my lord, let us do it while there is still time.' With one bound he leapt away from the king and the people saw that, in hardly the twinkle of an eye, he was standing against the spikes, facing the elephants. He cried, 'Give the word of command, my lord.' But the king said, 'No.' Badal insisted. The king then ordered his own elephant to turn around and walk backwards.

"The elephant walked away from the gate and then turning with its back to the gate, walked slowly backward. The king shouted to his men to give the word, and the 'Mahut' whispered into the elephant's ear. The elephant stood there shivering as if in fear of being hurt, but the 'Mahut' howled like a clap of thunder. Then the elephant walked swiftly backwards and the smiling face of Badal was seen for a moment between the gate and the elephant's back. At this moment a terrible rain of crimson shot up into the air and the elephant trembled. The spikes had gone through Badal's body and cut the elephant, but the 'Mahut' kept yelling at him like thunder. Again the elephant gave a great push and suddenly the gates opened.

"With a great clamor the Hindu army was within the gates, and they rushed into the city and rescued their queen, took the Moham-medan king captive and went back to their own capital."

A spell of silence lay on us as the great

Rathor with a gesture of his hand ended his story. We could see his fingers were trembling under his beard. The boys and girls of the family sat still as statues, but their eyes gleamed like the fire that had never gone out, consecrated to keep the family honor, a flame like a burning torch.

After a while Radjah asked, "If Badal was thirteen years old, how could he be your ancestor, my lord?"

"He was my ancestor's brother. There were two brothers. Badal was killed against the gate by the elephant in order to save the honor of our queen, and his older brother was killed within the city fighting for the protection of his queen. He was one of those who was in the queen's retinue disguised as a lady-in-waiting. This man left a child, a boy, and from that boy our family is descended. We are Rathors and we have always done with our hands things too difficult for others to do. We have protected woman's honor and given hospitality to every stranger."

## 124    Jungle Beasts and Men

We stayed with the Rathor's family many days, days full of tranquillity and kindness. In the evening the Rathor would tell us tales of chivalry.

One day a Russian gentleman came with a letter to our noble lord. He had come all the way from Russia to hunt tigers. The letter was from one of the big English officials in Calcutta, and was given to him because the official thought that the Rathor, being the best hunter of the district, would show the Russian how the Indians hunted. The Russian was a prince, I think, and had money enough to hire elephants and arrange for beaters. The Rathor agreed to take us with him.

"I will guide the elephants," I said, "because I know something about elephants."

And Radjah said, "I will sit with the Rathor on another elephant."

When we reached the jungle the next morning the beaters had already been gone twenty-four hours and they had made ready for the hunt. About five o'clock in the morning we

## The House of the Noble    125

moved on toward the clearing between the two jungles where the beaters were to drive the animals in. With the break of day we heard noises in the distance and then silence. In a little while a tiger snarled afar. A boar grunted, and parrots and all kinds of many-colored birds crossed the sky in great excitement. The hawk wheeled in the sky and plunged into the forest like a stone dropping, then flew up mounting higher and higher.

While the elephants stood still, the noise of the beaters drew nearer, and the undergrowth began to move and wave under us. My elephant with the Russian was standing ahead of the other elephant on which was the Rathor, his son and my friend Radjah, and which was a little to our right and behind us, about twenty yards away. I spoke to my elephant and said all kinds of sweet words to him so that he would keep his nerve when the real fight came about.

We were disappointed because, although we heard all manner of noises, nothing came. All

at once we saw a stag right behind us trying to get out of the jungle into the clearing and across to the other jungle, but his horns were caught in branches and he was held fast. He freed himself at last and darted away, fading into the darkness of the jungle beyond.

Then a great silence fell upon the jungle. Nothing moved, but by the tall grass that gleamed like sword blades as they waved in the sunlight I knew something was around. Hardly had I time to realize this than swift as a flash from a gun a tiger jumped out of his cover and stood facing us. My man, who had his rifle ready, saw only a part of the tiger and, being Russian and not knowing our way of hunting, fired at once. The tiger, with a terrible yell, bounded away out of sight, but a second later, with one leap, was hanging on to the side of our elephant. I knew it because the impact of his leap was so great that the elephant rocked and swayed for a moment, and I could feel his legs straining to run. But

I spoke to him, "Be still, brother, be still," and he obeyed my exhortation.

The tiger scrambled up and with one stroke of his paw broke the rifle in the hand of the Russian, who as he now stood defenceless on the elephant's back turned as white as chalk. The tiger did not notice me, concentrating all his attention and anger on the man who had injured him. Like a water of gold streaked with black running down the side of the elephant, the tiger hung, his claws in the elephant's hide. Again I whispered, "Be still, brother, be still. There is nothing the matter." The elephant lifted his trunk aloft and tried to strike the tiger, but it fell short of its object, an ineffective lash.

Now the tiger's paw was reaching out for the Russian's face. I could see his whiskers gleaming like black pine needles, while the Russian stood there with his back pressed against the side of the box. The tiger's paw was moving nearer, and his muzzle was less than a yard away. The poor Russian stood

like a petrified man as the tiger advanced. I shouted to the other elephant to come nearer, but then I saw that they were already as near as they could come. To the Rathor I shouted, "Fire!"

The tiger looked at me for one moment, gave a growl, and then turned aside and started at the Russian again, reaching his coat and ripping it to shreds with a sweep of one of his paws.

At this moment I heard a yell from another direction, the direction of the Rathor's elephant. The elephant was trumpeting, and as he trumpeted the tiger turned toward him. Now he was face to face with the Rathor, with only about twelve yards separating them. The Rathor gave a shout, and a rifle shot rang out. With a mortal yell the tiger fell under my elephant's feet. I looked then for the Russian but he had disappeared. He had fallen over the other side of the elephant, and lay wrapped in a profound swoon.

We all descended from our elephants and

picked the Russian up, putting him with the Rathor. Then we slung the tiger on the back of our elephant and rode home.

When we reached home and the Russian had been put to bed, I asked the Rathor, "But why did you wait that long before firing?"

"I wanted to see how close I could shoot," he replied. "When I saw that the face of the tiger was almost six inches away from the face of the Russian, at that instant I gave warning to the tiger. I made my elephant trumpet. Thus having warned the tiger, I was free to kill him. He foolishly looked at me and my shot went through his head, striking him between the eyes."

"Would you draw people to the point of death in order to test your skill?" I asked.

The Rathor answered, "Skill, like everything else, has its time and place. If you use it out of place, it would be ludicrous. The real place for skill is face to face with death."

Now I realized why he was so proud of his ancestor who had given his life and was liter-

## 130    Jungle Beasts and Men

ally crucified against a gate six hundred years before. These noble men did not only do the brave thing, but they did the bravest thing, and did it picturesquely.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE HIMALAYAS AND THE RIVER BANK

## CHAPTER VII

### THE HIMALAYAS AND THE RIVER BANK

**A**FTER leaving the house of the Rathor we struck northeast for the Himalayas, and on our way we reached the Ganges down toward the mouth of the river. When we came to the foothills of the Himalayas, we spent one day and night watching the ways of the animals in the forest. This was toward the end of the summer when there had been many days of rain. The rivers were running wild, and falls of water were thundering down all about us. Eagles wheeled and circled in the gray sky overhead, while occasionally below us we would hear the meowing of a tiger. Then we would see a golden antelope dash from copse to copse, looking for cover from its enemies.

## 134     Jungle Beasts and Men

One afternoon we were on the summit of a little mountain. Above and all about us were the Himalayas, white and clear like a note from a frozen bell. Below us was a ravine, along the bank of which was a narrow little pathway. The ground being wet, we could tell that the path had been made recently, in between the rains, by the feet of elephants. The river ran on like a black ribbon, and above us grew the trees, soaring upwards. The queer thing in climbing the Himalayas is that no matter how high a hill you climb, when you have reached its summit you generally find a higher one beyond it challenging you.

As our gaze wandered down from summit to summit till it reached the foot of the hill on which we were standing, or rather on which we were lying flat on our stomachs, we were startled by a cloud-like shape emerging from under the trees to the west of us. It stood silhouetted against the black river, and after a little we recognized it to be an elephant. He was very old, as we could judge from his great

## Himalayas and the River Bank 135

height and his enormous tusks. His wet body shone like ebony in the noonday light.

He essayed the space before him, then he walked on into the open and behind him came another elephant and behind that still another. As the first elephant disappeared under the foliage southeastward, so did the second, the third and the fourth. There were about two hundred elephants altogether, yet not a sound came from them. The trees against which they brushed their bodies slightly did not shake, even the leaves seemed not to move. Stillness was all around them as they walked. First went the old ones and the middle-aged ones, then came the babies, after them the mothers and last of all came the young fathers with their tusks hardly twelve years old. These last were more athletic looking, more alert and more mischievous than the rest. They seemed to be all muscle that gleamed with the luster of their bodies.

Radjah threw a little stone and the whole procession stopped still like a spinning javelin

## 136 Jungle Beasts and Men

caught in flight. They put their feet against the hillock on which they were standing and looked around. As soon as they distinguished our faces, they disappeared as clouds melt away in the sky of night. But suddenly a big stone fell above us, hitting a rock and breaking into fragments. The elephants were throwing stones at us. We took cover under the trees. One or two more stones fell near us, and then there was stillness once more. The elephants were gone.

We waited there two hours more. During that time we saw six elephants coming in hot haste from the west going southeast. These we supposed were stragglers in a hurry to catch up with the others who had gone before. We crept up on the upper rock and followed them. Of course they went very fast, but we knew that toward sundown they might stop to rest somewhere.

As we went on as fast as we could and as best we could, we came across two eagles fighting each other in the air, so low that they

## Himalayas and the River Bank 137

were scarcely a hundred yards above us. When the wings smote each other it sounded like a thunder clap, and now and then their feathers would fly off and rise up into the air. Then they wheeled down into the gorge below us and disappeared. As we looked we heard a screech rising from below and up flew the eagles, fighting and tearing at each other still, while blood dripped from them. At last one of them was beaten, his wings relaxed and flapped weakly as he wheeled two or three times in the air and fell. The other eagle tried to come near him and circled above us, but we came to the rescue. The wounded bird's wing was broken and his throat was ripped. He dragged himself a few feet from us, then fell dead.

Just then we heard a rustling sound as if a vast rope was uncoiling itself. We drew away from the dead eagle and tried to locate the flying one, but he had gone. In a few moments under our very eyes we saw a python, about

## 138 Jungle Beasts and Men

sixteen feet long, crawl up to the dead eagle and coil itself around the corpse.

We were frightened almost to death. We descended from the mountain top, and tramped toward a village which we could see in the clear daylight.

When we reached the village it was sundown. People had brought in their cattle and locked them up for the night, because the tigers were expected very soon. Only a few ovens were burning in the open, the flames still rising to the sky. The villagers were baking bread and singing.

We told them about the many hundred elephants we had seen go by and the battle of the eagles that followed it. They replied, "Wait here tonight and you will see what will happen." All the lights were out and most of the people were asleep, but we looked through the open holes, or rather windows, into the bright spaces made by the evening moon. It seemed as if the mountains were walking. It was very weird and inexplicable.

## Himalayas and the River Bank 139

The elephants, which had been hiding all this time, were now coming out into the open and were going through the open spaces believing no one would see them, for animals fear man most at that hour of the night. The procession moved on in the same order as they had gone during the daytime. After they had gone we were told that if we went out we would see the elephants, within seven or eight miles, resting for the night. Our host told us that the older ones would lie in a circle, inside that circle would be the middle-aged and the young fathers, forming another circle, and in the heart of the circle would be the little babies, surrounded by their mothers. The older ones would not sleep all night so that if tigers should come and attack, the herd would be ready for them, and there would be nothing left of the tigers.

"Perhaps tonight we will hear them," the villagers told us. So we waited. In a little while we heard the fox cry, which meant that the tiger was abroad. Soon we saw two green

## 140 Jungle Beasts and Men

eyes gleaming and we knew it was the tiger. He was after the elephants and it was but a minute or two before we heard the trumpeting of the elephants, just as if a thousand thunderclaps had come down at the same time. Then everything was still. As we watched we saw the tiger come back and begin his prowling about the village in search of something to eat.

The next morning when we set out on our travels once more, we made up our minds to move toward the jungle near the mouth of the Ganges, but this we did not do immediately. We went first through many cities and places and saw many things.

At last, in the autumn, we reached the mouth of the Ganges, at a village about fifty miles up the river from its real mouth. The village watchman, or constable, gave us shelter and he told us that the jungle nearby was full of tigers and the water below was full of crocodiles. Between the two, it seemed to us he had a very interesting life to lead. He said



WE WENT FIRST THROUGH MANY CITIES AND PLACES AND SAW MANY THINGS

## Himalayas and the River Bank 141

that next to the man-eating tiger, a brave crocodile is the most dangerous of animals.

"Have you a brave crocodile going about now?" I asked.

He replied, "That is the thing that is uppermost in my mind just now. We have a crocodile brave enough to catch both cattle and human beings, and we are losing cattle at the rate of ten a month, and we don't know how to kill him. Tomorrow, however, a man is coming who will surely finish him."

"How will he finish him?" I asked.

The watchman answered, "Just wait and see when he comes tomorrow."

"Who is he?" Radjah inquired.

"I will tell you something you must not repeat to anyone," the watchman replied. "He is the river pirate chief, his name is Data, meaning 'giver.' Whatever he robs from the rich, he gives to the poor."

Laughing, I said: "That is an old story. No such man exists."

"This man exists," replied the watchman.

## 142 Jungle Beasts and Men

"I am supposed to arrest him, but I *don't* do it."

"Why *don't* you do it?" I asked.

And he answered, "He goes like the wind. You never know from which direction he is going to blow or where he is going. And besides, he only robs the rich."

"But," I said, "aren't you employed by the rich to protect their property?"

"Yes," replied the watchman. "All the watchmen are employed by the rich, but since we do not get a rich living, I do not see why we should risk our lives more than is necessary. The robber goes all up and down the country and if I should do any harm to him, one of his followers would kill me and wipe away the whole countryside."

"But this can't go on," I said, "at least, it is impossible under our government."

"How can you stop it," he answered, "when the robber is a friend of the community and a lover of all men, and above all he does not plunder the entire time. He robs boats occa-

## Himalayas and the River Bank 143

sionally on the river, then disappears. He also has a way of robbing people of five thousand rupees once a year, on the river. In order to catch him you would have to spend about twenty thousand rupees, and from this you can see that it is wiser to let him steal five thousand once a year and let the matter alone."

"If every watchman had your philosophy," said Radjah, "our country would be full of thieves."

"Our country is full of thieves as it is, watchmen or no watchmen," the watchman replied. "People have not ceased to steal just because watchmen get salaries. However, tomorrow we shall see the thief of these parts, a very nice man, and a jolly fellow to boot."

The next morning about five o'clock, the village was roused by a terrible noise—"reh, reh, reh" was heard from all directions. We leaped to our feet, ready to find out what it was all about. The watchman, our host, exclaimed, "He is coming. He never enters a

## 144 Jungle Beasts and Men

village without giving notice that he is on his way."

From nowhere, it seemed, out of the dusk stepped a man, clad in white, carrying a javelin in his hand. His feet were shod in antelope skin boots. He wore a black beard, and his eyes were like sharp lights, his brows like eagles' wings. As he came into the room he noticed us and asked, "Who are these people?"

The watchman replied "They are pilgrims on their way looking for God."

Then Data said, "Do you go wandering in quest of God? God is within your own heart."

My friend Radjah made bold and asked, "Have you found him in your own heart?"

"Yes," answered Data, "I have."

"Then why do you behave like a robber?" questioned Radjah.

A gleam of anger flashed over the robber's face, but he was quiet a minute. Then he said, "I am sorry that you do not understand me.

## Himalayas and the River Bank 145

It is because I found God in my heart that I am what I am."

The whole village was astir outside, and people were walking in and out all over the place, as if a strange fever had seized them. The day broke as though someone had torn down a veil of blackness and revealed a stage, well lit up, with actors on it. The sun was like an army of light with spikes of lightning. And here was Data, our robber guest, busy inside with the household, cracking jokes with the two children of the watchman, and asking us all kinds of questions.

After the breakfast the robber sat down with the rest of us for the morning meditation. Then he said, "Three minutes are enough for God. Now let us attend to the business of men. What made you send for me?" he asked.

"Why is it that you have robbed two boats this year instead of one as you usually do?" asked the watchman. "The Government is angry."

"I had to do it this year," answered Data.

## 146 Jungle Beasts and Men

"There is a famine up the river and I took all the grain that I robbed from the second boat to the famine district. Several of my followers dressed themselves up like monks, and have carried rice up to the famine district and given it to the real monks who are helping the starving people. And I intend to rob one more boat, so I came to ask your permission."

"Well, if you must rob," said the watchman, "let it be the ship of an Indian laden with rice, but do not rob the rice ships owned by any Englishman, for he will make a great noise and go to Calcutta. Then they will ask me to arrest you and I can't do that, as you know."

The robber replied, "It is all the same to me. It does not matter which rich man I rob, as long as the poor man gets something to eat."

"You are a gentleman," I said to him.

"Oh, no," replied Data. "A gentleman robs for his own pleasures. I do not do that."

We were surprised at ourselves, sitting in the presence of a river pirate, and talking

## Himalayas and the River Bank 147

thus with him. And yet it seemed so natural at the time.

The thing the pirate came for, he did. In the course of the day, news was brought that the crocodile had been seen floating with the current and it was the low tide hour. It had come up the river and now was going down. Data hastened out and called us to come with him. He had his boat ready, with two men, under the shelter of a tree.

So all six of us set out rowing the boat, with Data in the bow, javelin in hand. "The best way to strike a crocodile," he told us, "is either to pierce his stomach or to pierce his mouth. We will see what we can do."

Hardly had he said this when he pointed to what looked like the folds of a blanket of a darkish color floating downstream toward us. Data signaled to his men, and said: "Do not row now, but hold the boat so that we can drift alongside the crocodile."

The watchman said, "This beast has a nasty

## 148     Jungle Beasts and Men

trick of upsetting a boat with its tail. Then he has a nice dinner."

"Hush, brother of unreason," said Data. "I have robbed many boats in this province. I know how to deal with beasts in this river. They are my fellow citizens."

Then he told us a story while waiting for the crocodile, which was floating down very slowly toward our boat. He said, "Once two men, journeying from a country where there were no rivers and no crocodiles, came to a river. As they were crossing in a boat, they saw floating on the surface a blanket, which one of them jumped out to grab. But the blanket grabbed him. It was a crocodile. The man in the boat, seeing his friend in distress, called to him and said, 'If you can't get the blanket, let go of it.' But the man in the water cried, 'I have let go of the blanket, but the blanket does not let go of me.' So now there is a proverb in that part of the country: 'You may let go of the blanket, but the blanket will

## Himalayas and the River Bank 149

never let go of you; so be careful and think what you are jumping at.'"

By this time the crocodile had come alongside of us. "Look out," yelled Data to the rowers, as the crocodile tried to put his tail under our boat. The boat swerved suddenly as the crocodile's tail rose out of the water like a lash. That was the crocodile's trick—to smite the boat with its tail and upset it. He vanished for a while, but we went on slowly, drifting with the current. He appeared again a hundred yards away, but evidently mistook us for another boat and not the one he had tried to upset. We started to row toward the shore and he at the same time made for us. He met us about ten feet from the river bank and made a mighty swipe with his terrible tail. His blow was a glancing one, but even at that the boat lurched dangerously. Then, raising half his body out of the water, he opened his huge mouth to grab one of us. At that instant the javelin plunged into his mouth.

In great agony the crocodile struck the boat

## 150 Jungle Beasts and Men

again and this time we were all thrown into the water which was now all red with blood. We swam for life toward the shore and as we reached it we saw the butt of the javelin sticking up in the air as the crocodile rushed after us. As he leapt on shore the pirate grabbed the shaft of the javelin and the crocodile's head rose above water for an instant as the javelin was pulled out of his mouth. Radjah and I were still in the water, and we thought that we should surely be killed by the crocodile. But hardly had he sunk under the surface again, when the javelin sang in the air and struck something rocky; again blood spurted out, turning the water a darker red.

As we hastened up the bank the crocodile swam away from shore and disappeared under water. A few seconds later we saw the javelin appear once more—and this time about sixty yards away from us. Knowing now that all danger was over, we swam down the river, righted the boat, got into it and rowed away. Pretty soon we noticed the javelin and the



HE MADE A MIGHTY SWIPE WITH HIS TERRIBLE TAIL

## Himalayas and the River Bank 151

crocodile floating near us. This time he did not strike the boat with his tail. When the rowers hit him on the head with their oars, he did not respond. His mouth was open, as if pleading to us for death. The pirate grabbed hold of the javelin and we towed the enormous creature to the shore. With a few more strokes on his head with the oars, the javelin was loosened and pulled out. The crocodile gasped for a short time and then lay dead.

When we got home that night, the pirate asked me, "Will you join my robber band? We are a fraternity of merciful men living under the vow of doing good to mankind. There is a famine up the river. I want you to come with me and take care of the famine-stricken people."

We did not know what to say, so we put off our decision until the following morning.

That night we again heard the tiger go by, and the other animals prowling around the clearing. We saw their eyes now and then as

## 152     Jungle Beasts and Men

they flashed in the darkness. Before we went to bed, the pirate told us a story. It was the story of his life.

"I was a rich man once," he began, "I owned a whole village. When I was twenty-five years old a terrible epidemic of smallpox smote our community. My mother died, my brothers died. The whole village died, cattle, men and all. I found that life wasn't worth living, so I wandered from place to place asking myself, 'What is the meaning of life? Does God exist?'"

"One day I came upon a holy man. He did not know how to read or write, but he was a great friend to children. Boys and girls would flock about him, wherever he went, attracted like bees to honey. So when I met him, I told him my sad tale. I told him how my mother and brothers and the whole village had been wiped away by the terrible epidemic.

"After I had finished, he turned to me and said, 'Dost thou know that there is a meaning in tragedy?'"

## Himalayas and the River Bank 153

"What is the meaning, my lord?" I asked.

"Dost thou know what death is?" the holy man rejoined.

"I know not," I answered.

"The holy man said, 'This. In the beginning, the kingdom of life and the kingdom of death were near together. People in the kingdom of life worked all the time and enjoyed it, and people in the neighboring kingdom of death lay in tranquil silence. The moon shone all the time, and even the plants ceased to grow. Nothing toiled there, even the trees did not cast shadows.

"One day the people in the kingdom of life said, 'We look at the kingdom of death and see that nobody works there. Let us go over there to live. Why should we work?' And so they went into the kingdom of death, and before long almost all the people were gone from the kingdom of life.

"Then God said, 'I made two kingdoms, one of life and one of death, and now those who worked seek only rest. Moderation of rest is

## 154 Jungle Beasts and Men

very good and so also is a moderation of work." And from that day on God put a dark veil on the borderland between the two kingdoms. This dark veil is called death and it frightens young minds. They think that beyond that veil there is nothing and so they dare not enter. No wonder they go on living in the kingdom of life, held back by the fear of this darkness.

"'So, my son,' the holy man continued, 'there is no death. It is only a black door which you open in order to go out. You must not sorrow for the dead.'

"'But why do I sorrow?' I asked.

"And the holy man answered, 'You do not sorrow for those who are gone. You sorrow over your loss of them. It is very selfish.'

"Thus," concluded Data, the pirate, "I learned how to give up sorrow because I found that it gave me pleasure to weep for those who were gone. No longer do I sorrow for the dead, but I do sorrow for the living. I would save people who are alive and try to prevent

## Himalayas and the River Bank 155

their death, but once death comes, the matter ceases to interest me."

Radjah then asked, "What else baffled thee, O questioner of the infinite?"

To this Data replied, "One day the holy man and I were going through a city. This city was stricken with famine. We saw people's bellies distended like drums stretched to their limit; they were simply bones covered with skin. We gave them all we had and, what's more, we urged them to eat their cattle, but Hindus would rather die than eat their cattle.

"We soon came to another community where they had something more to eat, and we helped the famine people for three months. Later on we found out that the village was not suffering from lack of grain. What had happened was that certain rich men had bought up the grain long before harvest time, and after the harvest was over, they took the grain away to another country and sold it at a great profit.

## 156 Jungle Beasts and Men

“‘So, my son,’ said the wise man, ‘all the suffering of mankind comes not because there is not enough, but because some want more than their share and they get it at the cost of their brothers.’

“‘From that place,” continued the pirate, “we went to live in the jungle, where the animals paid no attention to the holy man but went about their business as if nothing had happened. But wherever I went the animals noticed me. The tigers would growl from their lairs, the birds would fly away and the monkeys would jump from branch to branch as if a snake had gone into their home.

“‘One day I was standing on the river bank and I felt some thing cold and clammy on my foot. It was a cobra lying on it or rather moving across it very slowly. I stood as still as a stone and it slowly crawled away and disappeared into its hole. Then for the first time I saw the holy man standing not ten yards away from me. ‘Were you frightened?’ he asked.

## Himalayas and the River Bank 157

“‘I replied, ‘When I saw that cobra on my foot I felt more than death. For two minutes the world was quite black and I seemed to forget my body. And since I thought I was more than dead I could not move. I wasn’t frightened, for even my sense of fear was paralyzed.’

“‘Then the holy man said, ‘Now from this day on try to live as if your fear were paralyzed, as if you had no body, as if you felt neither good nor bad.’

“‘That same night, right in front of our cave, a tiger killed an antelope, after which I noticed a strange odor and I asked the holy man what that odor was.

“‘It is the odor of the fear of the antelope,’ he answered, ‘for the antelope was killed not because it could not run away from the tiger, but because its own sense of fear paralyzed its legs and therefore the tiger killed it. It could run faster than the tiger, but it was too frightened. As soon as an antelope sees a tiger it runs, then it grows afraid and as it

## 158      Jungle Beasts and Men

grows afraid, its fear paralyzes its movements and in the end the tiger gets the antelope.'

"During the last watch of the night when the song birds began to sing, I left the cave. The tiger was still sitting there, though his dinner was over. He growled at me, but I stood still and said to myself, 'I have no body, I have no fear. He can't take my body because I haven't any.' After looking at me for a few minutes, with his eyes gleaming in the semi-darkness, he turned his head, stood up slowly and walked away from the mouth of our cave. Then a lot of little animals came and I let them eat what was left of the body.

"At break of day I walked out of the jungle. I did not see the holy man again. I did not need to see anyone. I had learned my lesson. He who lives without fear or hate is the only free man. Since then I spend my time taking care of people who are suffering, and I have no sense of either good or bad. Wherever there is suffering, I ameliorate the suffering of the people with the things possessed by those

## Himalayas and the River Bank 159

who do not suffer. I can do no wrong because I have no fear or hate.

"Now it is time to go to bed," concluded the pirate. "Think of God as something inside of you and not to be found by wandering around India from shrine to shrine. The day you will see him will be the day you rise above hate and fear."

The next morning when we woke up, we found that the pirate had already been gone a long time. We went down to the river bank to take a last look at the crocodile. He was lying dead and a great number of vultures were fighting over him. While we were standing there a villager came and filed the teeth from its mouth. For crocodile teeth, like ivory, are valuable, as beautiful things can be made from them. On the opposite side of the river bank, three or four other crocodiles were basking in the sunlight, their mouths wide open, and little birds, sparrow-like creatures, were cleaning their teeth by eating the worms

## 160     Jungle Beasts and Men

from their gums. These were the crocodiles' dentists.

Then we turned our faces homeward, our pilgrimage ended. For with the pirate we had found the truth for which we had been in quest. God is within us and we must live without hate or fear.

**END**